Title The Beam and Shadow of the Spotlight: Visibility and Invisibility in Women's Experiences of Domestic Violence and Abuse

Name Josephine Neale

The Beam and Shadow of the Spotlight:

Visibility and Invisibility in Women's Experiences of Domestic Violence and Abuse

Josephine Neale

A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire,
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Institute of Applied Social Research
University of Bedfordshire

November 2017

Author's Declaration

I, Josephine Neale, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Thesis title: The Beam and Shadow of the Spotlight: Visibility and Invisibility in Women's Experiences of Domestic Violence and Abuse

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;

2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;

3. Where I have cited the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

6. None of this work has been published before submission.

Josephine Neale

Abstract

Although it has received greater policy attention in recent years, domestic violence and abuse (DVA) is a global problem that, at a national level, remains under-reported, under-prosecuted and under-convicted. The apparent ineffectiveness of policy approaches in reducing the incidence of DVA, or mitigating its social and economic costs, not least upon those directly experiencing DVA, forms the backcloth of this enquiry.

The aim of the study presented in this thesis was to explore, from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, the processes by which heterosexual women enter, endure and leave abusive relationships. Using semi-structured narrative style interviews, I worked with fourteen women with a wide range of characteristics in terms of age, ethnicity, physicality, socio-economic status and the length of time elapsed since their experiences of abuse.

Using Nicola Gavey's (2005) concept of cultural scaffolding (the discourses and [hetero]normative practices that make it so difficult to identify a relationship as abusive), I examined the space between normalised heterosexual relationships and abuse and, in the process, provided a better understanding of women's routes into DVA. I have shone a spotlight on the full range of perpetrators' behaviours that entrap and oppress their female partners and have identified four key domains in which the tactics of the abuser work to: ensnare his victim; dismantle her previous identities; prevent her from leaving the relationship; and punish her for leaving. These include behaviours used to manipulate women's social and support networks in order to prolong or sabotage their attempts to escape the abuse.

From a feminist poststructuralist perspective, participants' experiences of entering, enduring and leaving abusive relationships can be read as part of the wider cultural scaffolding of heteropatriarchy, which left them exposed to ensnarement and exploitation. Using Dark Triad (Paulhus 2002) as a model for conceptualising perpetrators' manipulation of their ex-partners, their children, and professionals, I offer an alternative way of understanding men's abuse of their female partners.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the 14 women who participated in my study. I recognise the significance of what I was asking them to do, and the emotional costs of revisiting their experiences. I appreciate the time and energy that they so generously gave. Without their contribution, this study would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank my colleagues at Luton All Women's Centre, Stepping Stones, Watford Women's Centre, and Women's Aid in Luton for supporting my study by putting me in contact with participants.

Sincere thanks are due to Professor David Barrett, Director of Studies, and Professor Samuel Stein, Second Supervisor. Their advice, guidance and belief in me have sustained me throughout the project.

I owe a huge debt to Dr Kathryn Ellis, for her friendship and unstinting support in helping me to clarify my arguments.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my family. They have kept me grounded throughout, provided encouragement during my moments of self-doubt, and tolerated my frequent distraction with good grace.

Presentations

2017 *Remote Control: Post-Separation Domestic Abuse*. British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women Section Conference, Windsor, UK.

2016 *Making Sense of Domestic Abuse: Individual Deficit, or 'Dark Tetrad' Personality?* British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women Section Conference, Windsor, UK.

2015 *The Beam, and Shadows, of the Spotlight: Visibility and Invisibility in Women's Accounts of Abusive Relationships.* European Conference on Domestic Violence, Queen's University, Belfast, NI.

2015 *'Identity Theft': Living With Domestic Abuse.* British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women Section Conference, Windsor, UK.

2015 *Professionals' Responses to Women in Abusive Relationships: Valued Support, or Collusion With Perpetrators?* University of Northampton, 'Violence: Children and Families' Conference, Northampton, UK.

2014 *The Beam, and Shadows, of the Spotlight: Visibility and Invisibility in Women's Accounts of Abusive Relationships.* Luton Women's Aid, Luton, UK.

2014 *Making the Case for Victims' Meaningful Participation in the Development of Domestic Abuse Services.* British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women Section Conference, Windsor, UK.

2014 *Professionals' Responses to Women in Abusive Relationships*. Watford and Three Rivers Domestic Abuse Forum, Watford, UK.

2014 *Making the Case for Victims' Meaningful Participation in the Development of Domestic Abuse Services.* Leighton-Linslade Women's Group, Leighton Buzzard, UK.

2014 *Professionals' Responses to Women in Abusive Relationships.* Luton Borough Council's Domestic Violence Scrutiny Committee, Luton, UK.

2013 *The Beam, and Shadows, of the Spotlight: Visibility and Invisibility in Women's Accounts of Abusive Relationships.* Leighton-Linslade Women's Group, Leighton Buzzard, UK.

2013 *Professionals' Responses to Women in Abusive Relationships: Valued Support, or Collusion with Perpetrators?* Leighton-Linslade Women's Group, Leighton Buzzard, UK.

2013 *Professionals' Responses to Women in Abusive Relationships: Valued Support, or Collusion with Perpetrators?* British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women Conference, Windsor, UK.

2012 *The Beam, and Shadows, of the Spotlight: Visibility and Invisibility in Women's Accounts of Abusive Relationships.* British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women Conference, Windsor, UK.

Contents

Figures and Tables

Introduction

Although it has received greater policy attention in recent years, domestic violence and abuse (DVA) is a global problem that, at a national level, remains under-reported, under-prosecuted and under-convicted. The apparent ineffectiveness of policy approaches in reducing the incidence of DVA, or mitigating its social and economic costs, not least upon those directly experiencing DVA, forms the backcloth of this enquiry. In this introduction, I describe those preliminary insights into the nature of this disjuncture between policy intent and lived experience, gained through my academic background and professional and personal experience of working with women experiencing DVA in local practice contexts. I identify the potential lines of enquiry for my study generated by these understandings, as well as the research approach they seemed to indicate. As discussed, these, in turn, form the basis for aims and objectives geared towards the generation of new insights into heterosexual women's experience of abusive relationships, particularly the more insidious modes of oppression deployed by perpetrators.

DVA as a societal problem

DVA affects an estimated 35% of women worldwide (WHO 2014). Because of its significant social and economic implications, and long-lasting negative effects on victims, it is an important area for further research. In the following sections, the prevalence of DVA within the UK and the costs, both societal and to the individual, are discussed.

Prevalence and incidence

In a recent pan-European survey, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014) asked 42,000 women across the 28 member states of the European Union (EU) about their experiences of physical, sexual and psychological violence. One in three of these women reported experiencing some form of physical or sexual abuse since the age of 15, and 8% reported having been abused within the previous year; 43% of women had experienced psychological abuse from a current or previous partner. Findings from the 1,510 UK respondents to the survey are consistent with these figures. Of the UK women who were married, cohabiting, or involved in a relationship (without living together) at the time of the interview, 29% had experienced physical and/or sexual violence, and 46% had experienced psychological abuse, from a current or former partner. Of those who had experienced physical and/or sexual violence, only a quarter indicated that the most serious incident had come to the attention of the police.

In the last 20 years there have been significant improvements in terms of the political rhetoric around domestic abuse; it is now firmly on the policy agenda at both national and local levels (Matczak et al. 2011). Despite this success, the fall in incidence of domestic abuse has stalled (see Figures 1 and 2). Since 2009, whilst other forms of violence have continued to decline, the prevalence figures for domestic abuse have plateaued (ONS 2015) and, since 2010, the percentage of incidents reported to the police that resulted in prosecution has fallen (CPS 2016; CPS 2017; Guy 2014). Thus, domestic violence can be seen to be a high reward, low risk, crime. Of the small proportion of cases that came to the attention of the UK police in 2016-17, 110,833 were referred to the Crown Prosecution Service – a fall of 6% from 2015-16. Of these, 70,853 (64%) resulted in convictions for

domestic abuse (CPS 2017). In the previous year in London alone, the police recorded nearly 60,000 offences of violent domestic abuse, 25 of which were murders (Bentham 2016). Furthermore, whilst some of the more extreme forms of domestic violence (e.g. violence against the person, and sexual offences) are reducing, domestic homicide is not, and coercive control (which is defined and discussed in Chapter 1) is held to be increasing (Stark 2012a; Stark 2012b). In the next sections I discuss the implications of this for the national economy, and for individuals experiencing DVA.

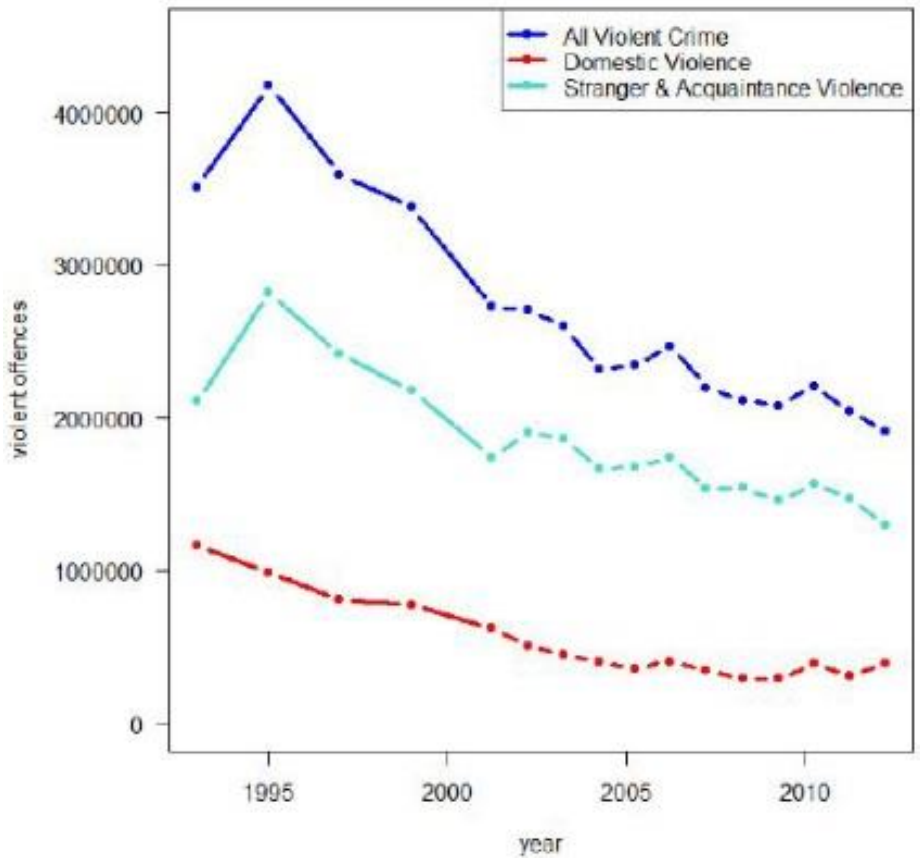

Figure 1: Incidence of violent crimes between 1993 and 2013 (ONS 2015)

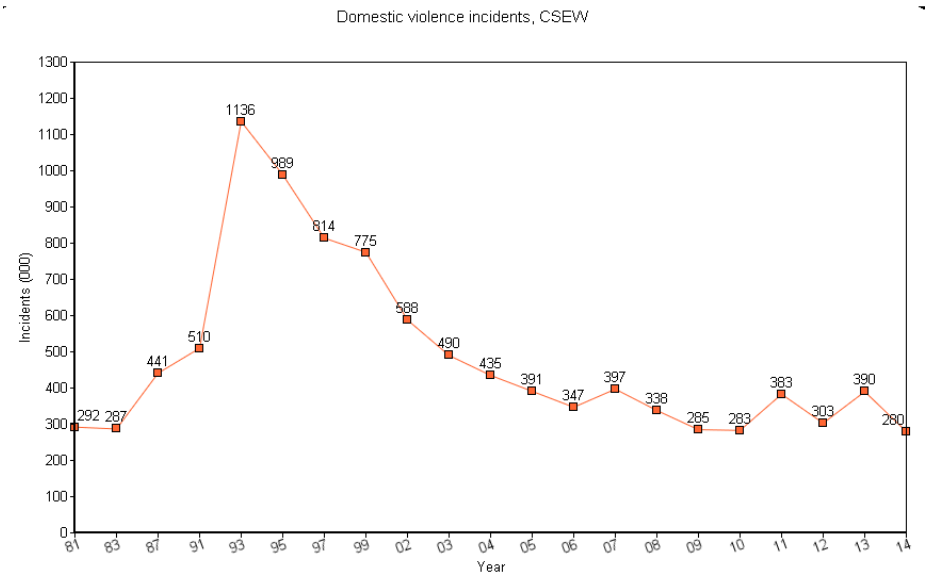

Figure 2: Incidence of domestic violence between 1981 and 2014 (ONS 2015)

Cost of DVA to the economy

Domestic abuse is now recognised as a serious public health issue that detrimentally affects the lives of victims during, and long after exiting, the relationship. There are also significant financial implications from the harm caused by domestic abuse. In the UK, the cost is conservatively estimated to be nearly £16 billion per year. This includes £10 billion in human suffering, the cost to employers in lost productivity of £1.9 billion, and the cost to the state (of providing physical and mental health care, social services, housing, criminal justice and civil legal services) of £3.8 billion (Walby 2009). If considering violence against women more generally (i.e. intimate partner violence *and* sexual violence), the cost per year is estimated to be €28.4 billion – or £25 billion[1] (Walby and Olive 2014).

In addition, domestic abuse is closely associated with other crimes. Domestic violence accounts for 33%[2] of all crime against the person (ONS 2016a), and has a higher rate of repeat victimisation than any other crime (Walby and Allen 2004). In psychiatric populations, a third of female patients had experienced domestic violence (Oram et al. 2013) and, in Brandon et al's (2012) study of 139 serious case reviews (where there had been the death or serious injury of a child), domestic abuse featured in nearly two-thirds of cases. This places significant additional strain on the financial and emotional resources available to staff in already overstretched criminal justice, health and social care agencies.

Because of the levels of under-reporting, the scale and economic cost to the state of domestic abuse is likely to be far greater than current data suggest (Walby et al. 2014). It places a heavy burden on public services, and the economy. These data, though, also represent the lived experiences of real people. In the following section, the health, social, emotional and economic costs to the individual are discussed.

[1] At 1 Euro to 0.88 British Pounds (exchange rate as at 10 November 2016).

[2] The reliability of this figure is disputed. Sylvia Walby has criticised the ways in which the data are collected, arguing that domestic violence (and other forms of violence against women) are significantly under-measured. For a discussion, see: Walby, S., Towers, J., and Francis, B. (2014). "Mainstreaming domestic and gender-based violence into sociology and the criminology of violence." *The Sociological Review*, 62, 187-214.

DVA as an individual problem

In addition to its impact on the economy, DVA has been shown to have a significant and long-lasting effect on women. Some of the literature has a tendency to pathologise women, an approach of which I am critical (and discuss further in chapter 1). It does, however, provide a useful picture of the range of ways in which DVA changes women's lives. Domestic abuse can result in long-term problems with physical health (Bosch et al. 2015; Campbell et al. 2002; Ferreira et al. 2015; Lacey et al. 2013; Signorelli et al. 2012; Sillito 2012b; Walker 2009; Wong and Mellor 2014), sexual health (Williams et al. 2010; Wong and Mellor 2014), and mental health (Hegarty et al. 2013; Itzin et al. 2008; Karakurt et al. 2014; Lacey et al. 2013). It also has a substantial impact on emotional wellbeing. It has been shown to lead to psychosocial problems such as fearfulness, depression and PTSD, anxiety attacks, sleeping problems, low self-esteem, feelings of shame and guilt, difficulties in building and maintaining relationships (Ansara and Hindin 2011; Fogarty et al. 2008; Mapayi et al. 2013; Signorelli et al. 2012; Skomorovsky et al. 2015; Stockman et al. 2015) and significantly reduced quality of life (Wittenberg et al. 2007). Women who have been in abusive relationships experience difficulty making decisions, and in trusting themselves and others; it undermines their confidence and sense of self-efficacy, and engenders feelings of worthlessness (Abrahams 2007; Abrahams 2010).

Because they have limited power to negotiate at the point of having sex, women in abusive relationships are far less likely to use contraception (Maxwell et al. 2015) and, due to the chronic stress caused by abuse, they have poorer reproductive health and pregnancy outcomes (Sarkar 2008; Scribano et al. 2013). For mothers, compromised mental health caused by the abuse has been shown to impair their capacity to parent their children (Casanueva et al. 2008; Kan and Feinberg 2015; Pels et al. 2015; Wong and Mellor 2014), and to negatively affect the mother-child relationship (Boeckel et al. 2014; Buchanan et al. 2014; Humphreys and Bradbury-Jones 2015; Levendosky et al. 2012; Thiara and Humphreys 2017). Safeguarding concerns on the part of child protection agencies lead to mothers experiencing domestic abuse being at increased risk of losing their children to the care system (Ijeoma and Shenyang 2013). Perpetrators have been shown to deliberately undermine the mother-child bond (Humphreys and Bradbury-Jones 2015; Katz 2015; Monk 2014; Monk Forthcoming; Thiara and Humphreys 2017); thus, women and children continue to be punished long after the abusive relationship has ended.

In addition to its impact on health and wellbeing, domestic abuse harms women economically (Sharp-Jeffs 2015; Sharp-Jeffs et al. 2017). Absence from work due to injury, and perpetrators' deliberate undermining of their partner's professional credibility (for example by preventing her attending, or repeatedly embarrassing her at, her place of work) are common in women experiencing abuse. These factors have been shown to have significant negative effects on employment stability (Crowne et al. 2011; O'Leary-Kelly et al. 2008; Wathen et al. 2015) and career development (Lantrip et al. 2015), which have a deleterious impact on economic wellbeing (Adams et al. 2013).

Thus far, I have delineated the wider social, economic and policy contexts of my chosen field of study. I have discussed the prevalence of DVA and its implications, for society, the economy and the individual. The aspects described in this section are major sites at which

male perpetrators of DVA manipulate their female partners, children, and those working with them. The intersection between these wider contexts and my own personal, academic and local experience led me to identify the rationale for and particular focus of my investigation, its aims and objectives and my choice of research approach. I now provide an overview of these, in advance of a more detailed discussion in Chapter 2.

Developing the rationale for the study

I have a long-standing interest in gender-based violence. My undergraduate and masters' degrees were in the field of psychology, and my dissertation at each level consisted of primary research on the topic. This academic training, and my postgraduate experience of conducting commissioned research, has provided me with a valuable grounding in traditional psychology's approaches to DVA. These approaches are discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, Understanding Domestic Violence and Abuse.

I have worked with specialist women's support agencies in Luton and the surrounding area in both a research and voluntary capacity. During this time, I have become increasingly bemused about the extent to which popular and professional understandings of DVA reflect the lived experience of women using those services. Also, because they form part of women's experiences, I have been concerned about the quality of the responses that women receive from statutory agencies. Many have talked to me about feeling overwhelmed by the conflicting demands and unrealistic advice from professionals in public sector agencies, and their difficulties in negotiating a path through what they perceived to be a network of autocratic systems. They have routinely contrasted this with the ethos of empowerment that underpins the specialist women's sector; the advocacy and support that they received had helped them to believe that living free from abuse was both desirable and possible.

Over the last two decades there has been a noticeable shift in the specialist women's sector from what was once a significant political movement for social change to, apart from a few notable exceptions, the provision of depoliticised and clinicalised services (Lehrner and Allen 2009; McDonald 2005a). In the more recent climate of swingeing budget cuts (Grierson 2018) and the move toward competitive funding for refuges and other women's services, the basic feminist principles that, from the 1970s, underpinned the sector have largely been eroded. The demands of local authority funders for more heavily regulated voluntary sector services and high 'outputs' (measured in terms of the numbers of women receiving a service rather than its quality), has compromised those services' ability to respond appropriately to the range and complexity of needs with which women present (Warrington 2003). The shift, from specialist services that existed independently from but worked alongside statutory agencies, to a sector that is in thrall to local government has coincided with the strengthening of some aspects of the professional discourses and the diminishing of others. This has led to heightened activity with certain groups, but comes at the expense of others. It is to some of these shifts that I now turn.

In Luton and the surrounding area, in line with the national picture, there has been an increasing emphasis on high risk[3] domestic abuse cases (Hester 2011), with significant

[3] 'High risk' cases are those in which there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in immediate danger (College of Policing, 2016).

resources allocated to the top five to ten percent of cases that reach the threshold for Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) intervention[4]. This has led to fewer resources for the far larger category (90-95%) of cases that do not reach the threshold for referral to MARAC. Indeed, a recent report on Bedfordshire Police's response to domestic abuse was highly critical of the service provided for victims who were assessed as medium or standard risk, stating that they 'received no specialist support and had a poor service, with little attention paid to their safeguarding' (HMIC 2015, p6).

Another shift in the discursive landscape has been with regard to the status, as victims of DVA, of women relative to their children. Recognition of the harm to children of living with domestic abuse now tends to dominate statutory responses, and mothers are charged with protecting them from the abuse. Rational discussion of what is meant by 'protection', and the barriers that mothers face in being able to provide that protection, has been subordinated. Professional responses that foreground the welfare of children, yet overlook crucial support for mothers, inevitably fail to achieve positive outcomes for either. When they do fail, mothers are blamed for 'failure to protect' their children (Featherstone and Fraser 2012; Goodmark 2010) and the appropriateness of the professional intervention remains unexamined.

Arguably the most concerning omission from professional discourses on DVA is the role played by its perpetrators. They are conspicuous by their relative absence in many of the discussions about and responses to domestic abuse. In social work with families experiencing DVA, for example, practitioners have been reluctant to engage with perpetrators (Littlechild 2003; Littlechild 2008), and it has been argued that their identity as 'fathers' is invisible (Featherstone 2003; Featherstone and Peckover 2007; Maxwell et al. 2012). Their lack of visibility in practice is echoed in the literature. In an analysis of publications on children's experiences of domestic violence (Callaghan 2015), the relative frequency of words used in the corpus was calculated. The term 'mothers' was the fifth most frequently appearing term, and 'maternal' was 38th. By contrast, 'fathers' was ranked 147th, and 'paternal' did not feature at all. Even in criminal justice settings, where perpetrators are most visible, the emphasis is on those who are considered to be more dangerous, and who have physically assaulted their partners/ex-partners (Police Foundation 2014). Thus, even in domains charged with preventing and punishing this form of abuse, the visibility of perpetrators is restricted to a tiny proportion of overall DVA cases.

There is a widely held view amongst practitioners and the general public that some women are at least in part responsible for the abuse that they encounter (Danis and Lockhart 2003; McDonald 2005b; Virkki 2015). However, my own experience of working in this field suggests that, upon entering the relationship, women have little notion that it will come to be abusive. When it does, they rarely conceptualise what is happening to them as 'abuse', which they tend to associate with stereotypical images of 'battered women' with bruising, black eyes and broken bones. Initially, at least, they consider their partner's behaviour to be triggered by external influences such as work-related stress, alcohol or illicit drugs. By the time they do begin to reformulate their view and see themselves as at risk, their opportunities to escape the relationship have been seriously compromised - as a direct consequence of the actions of their abuser. Furthermore, although physical assaults often

[4] MARACs were set up in the mid-2000s to share information about, in order to improve the safety of, high risk victims of DVA and their children or other vulnerable dependants.

result in serious injury and, sometimes, death, these are not the elements of their abuse that have the deepest psychological impact on women.

The aspects with which women seem to struggle the most are those that are less tangible than physical assaults, i.e. the more insidious behaviours that, over time, erode their sense of self as autonomous and agentive human beings. They have greater difficulty recognising them, at the time, as intentional behaviours designed to oppress, and find it harder to repair the damage caused by them.

My appraisal of this current landscape is that the vast majority of women experiencing DVA, although highly visible to statutory agencies, do not appear to be a priority for their support. Mothers' needs are seen as subordinate to those of their children and, despite having the least power and fewest resources of all of the stakeholders, they are held to have primary responsibility for their children's welfare. Their abusers are not scrutinised or held accountable in the same way, and their invisibility allows women to be positioned as blameworthy – for entering into a relationship with an abusive man, for staying with him, and for failing to protect her children from the abuse. Although feminist writers are now challenging these issues, they have not been prioritised in much of the DVA literature (which, historically, has been based on an individualist tradition, and is therefore only partial in its coverage), and they have not been sufficiently considered in interventions.

It was this disjuncture, between the 'received wisdom' and my own experience of working in the field, that stimulated my research interest. I have developed a curiosity about women's routes into DVA, and the ways in which they make sense of their experiences. My thesis seeks to explore the processes by which heterosexual women enter, endure and leave abusive relationships. Its particular focus is on the kinds of control mechanisms available to perpetrators of DVA[5], and the ways in which their use of those mechanisms might shape women's experiences.

Aims and objectives

Whilst some forms of abuse can be present in all relationship types, others are specific to the gender and sexuality of the individuals involved. For example, in a same sex relationship the abuser may threaten to expose their partner's sexual preference to their employer, friends and family (or, if they themselves are not out, use their own fear of exposure) as a way of controlling their partner (Donovan et al. 2006). I acknowledge that heterosexual men can be abused by heterosexual women, and that abuse also occurs in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities. However, due to my previous experience of working in this field, and because they make up by far the highest proportion of victims, my interest is in exploring heterosexual women's experiences of DVA.

As a member of academic staff in an applied social studies department, and as a DVA trainer for my local community safety partnership, I have a role in explaining certain aspects of violence against women to students and practitioners. My answers to the most common questions (such as 'why some women have a succession of abusive relationships', 'why women stay with abusive partners', and 'whether there is gender symmetry in DVA') have become, over time, well-rehearsed and my interest in these issues has shifted. Whilst I

[5] The various terms used to describe DVA are contested by academics and professionals working with abuse. Chapter 1 includes a detailed discussion of these issues.

welcome opportunities to address such topics, I foreground the facilitation of others' understanding rather than my own personal development. One aspect of these discussions about which I have remained animated, however, is the ease and frequency with which women experiencing DVA are 'othered'. I have always striven to persuade listeners that DVA does not restrict itself to certain 'types' of women; my experience of working with women, and my reading of the literature, suggests that any woman could, potentially, be abused. My interest in examining the space between these two positions is one that I wished to explore in this study.

Very little has been written about how *women* conceptualise their experiences of meeting the man who would go on to abuse them, or their route into, and out of, oppressive relationships. I had been unconvinced by the DVA literature based on an individualist tradition that positions women as objects of study rather than informants in that, written from an outsider's perspective, it appeared to present a relatively simplistic and deterministic picture of these processes. In my own work with women, I have considered them to be experts on their own experiences, and valuable collaborators in the generation of new knowledge. I wished to explore the processes by which heterosexual women enter, endure and leave abusive relationships and, in particular, to examine the more insidious ways in which they are oppressed.

The aims of my study were to:

- Provide a critique of the literature that highlights its gaps and weaknesses, and unsettles dominant understandings of DVA;
- Better understand women's routes into DVA, by examining the space between normalised behaviour within heterosexual relationships and abuse;
- Shine a spotlight on the full range of perpetrators' behaviours that entrap and oppress their female partners;
- Examine the responses to their circumstances from women's networks (family, friends, and professionals), and the extent to which they reinforce or challenge the perpetrator's control.

In undertaking this work, my objectives were to:

- Provide an alternative discourse on women's routes into and out of DVA, in which they are not positioned as 'blameworthy';
- Contribute to the existing knowledge base aimed at helping women to identify, and thus avoid, potential abusers;
- Use my findings to inform policy and practice via:
    - Publications in academic journals and trade press;
    - Presentations at academic conferences;
    - Contributions to the teaching of students who are preparing for work in the human services;
    - The delivery of training to practitioners who are working in the human services.

The site of enquiry for much of the DVA research to date has been the behaviour of its casualties rather than its culprits. The questions that dominate this literature are to do with seeking commonalities between victims and exploring their reasons for tolerating the abuse. A similar emphasis exists in practice. Once an abusive relationship is exposed to agencies,

the spotlight is constantly focussed on the woman and, if she is a mother, her children – whether as witnesses for criminal justice agencies, as the site of child protection concerns, or as victims in need of support. The brightness of the beam casts deep shadows all around them and the agencies working with them. My perception is that perpetrators are exploiting the contrast between illumination and shadow, and occupy the dark space created by the beam. Within this space, cloaked in the invisibility it provides, they are able to manipulate their partner/ex-partner, her children, and the people around her. What I am attempting to do in this study is shorten the focal length of the spotlight beam to illuminate the wider context in which DVA is written about, understood and responded to. The potential benefits of this undertaking are threefold: by illuminating the 'early warning signs', it will increase our understanding of the space between normalised heterosexual behaviour and abuse and thus help women to avoid becoming ensnared in controlling relationships; it will contribute to an alternative discourse on DVA, in which responsibility for the abuse begins with the perpetrator rather than his victim(s); and it will make a valuable contribution to the literature on best practice for agencies responding to DVA.

Research approach and methods

My interest in this field is not purely academic. I am concerned with political intervention that improves the lives of women, and my theoretical orientation is informed by this position. DVA is simply one of the methods by which men oppress women, and the oppression of women is not inevitable. It is a set of detailed practices that can be challenged by feminist politics, and deconstructed. I acknowledge that mine is only one of many possible perspectives, yet it is no less valid for that. Women make up more than 50% of the population of the UK, and virtually 100% of victims (ONS 2017.

Experiences of DVA, and the decisions made by women in order to cope, survive and/or escape, are highly subjective. They are formed, and continue to be influenced, by a host of socio-cultural and politico-economic factors, the combinations of which are unique to each individual. Whilst quantitative approaches can provide partial answers to a range of questions, they do not address in any meaningful way the issues that I wished to explore. I considered that simple measurement of these issues on any 'objective' (read quantitative) scale would do little to address the complex interplay between the various factors acting on them. Furthermore, I was cognisant of the fact that those invited to participate in my study had the 'knowledge' that I would be attempting to reveal. The aspects that they considered to be most salient might well have differed amongst themselves as a group, and from my view as researcher. I was keen that, rather than the researcher determining which factors were of importance, this study should be underpinned by the voices of women who have experienced DVA. For these reasons, I chose a qualitative approach for my enquiry.

My previous academic training had brought me into contact with social constructionism, an approach that I considered for this study because it denaturalises what are, essentially, man-made concepts. It challenges the notion of an objective 'reality', and instead points to the shared assumptions based on jointly constructed understandings of that reality. As an epistemological framework, social constructionism would have enabled me to deconstruct, and reconstruct, concepts of identity; thus, assumptions about what is understood by terms such as 'mother' (as opposed to 'father' or 'parent') would have been available for critique. However, I wished to go further, and poststructuralism allowed me to do this.

Poststructuralism goes further in challenging the *status* of our systems of knowledge, and recognises that they are always shaped by power. Adopting a feminist poststructuralist approach for my study would allow me to go beyond traditional approaches to DVA, in order to render more visible those aspects in which I was most interested. I wished to resist, and argue for an alternative to, psychology's individualist tradition (Happonen 2017) in which the 'problem' of DVA is located within individuals; i.e. certain people perpetrate, invite another to perpetrate, or do not do enough to prevent/resist DVA. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, I consider that this leads to: the pathologisation of individuals; a stunting simplification of the problem(s) and the solution(s); and narrows the range of understanding. A feminist poststructuralist position allowed me to consider the broader context in which DVA is written about, and experienced.

I deemed it of critical importance that women with experience of DVA were given a voice with which to speak about the full range of perpetrators' controlling behaviours. In my previous work with local providers of DVA services, I had built up good relationships with their management and trustees. They had indicated that they were broadly supportive of my ideas for PhD study, and were keen for me to speak with the women using their services. One of the difficulties of conducting research in the field of DVA is accessing participants, so it seemed wise to exploit this opportunity.

In previous research studies, I have used semi-structured interviewing to access people's views on their own experiences. I was, therefore, familiar with, and confident about using, it as a method of data collection. In this study, however, I wished to go beyond a traditional approach to interviewing, in which the researcher decides in advance the topics that will be addressed. Rather than impose too rigid a structure on the encounter, I was keen that participants should feel able to disclose the aspects of their experiences that were most meaningful *for them*. For this reason, I chose a narrative interviewing style in which they were positioned as 'storyteller' rather than 'respondent'.

Semi-structured, narrative-style interviews would provide women with a voice to express their thoughts, and the power to shape the agenda for our discussions, but I also needed a way of interpreting what they told me. A straightforward narrative approach would have restricted my analysis to their understandings of their experiences. Braun and Clarke's (2014; 2006) method of thematic analysis (TA), conducted within a feminist poststructuralist framework, offered a flexible yet robust and systematic way of *interpreting* those accounts in line with my aims.

My research approach and methods are taken up in greater detail in Chapter 2, but this introductory section concludes with an outline of my thesis overall.

Outline of thesis

In Chapter one, I set out the epistemological and ontological framework within which I conducted the study, and review the existing literature on traditional understandings of DVA. Having established some of the gaps in this body of knowledge, I examine those aspects of DVA that are more, and less, visible in current understandings of DVA. In Chapter two I begin by clarifying the ways in which my methodological approach informed my research design. I discuss the methods chosen to explore the topic, and justify those choices. Having discussed the context in which this work is situated, the methodological

approach taken and the methods used to collect and analyse my data, I then set out my findings. These are organised in terms of three phases of the abusive relationship: first encounters with the perpetrator; living with abuse; and post-separation abuse. In Chapter three, I set out participants' experiences and aspirations prior to meeting the man who would go on to abuse them. These are considered in relation to the literature that seeks to establish differences between 'normal' and 'not normal' women in terms of victimhood. In Chapter four, I explore participants' experiences of living with abuse and the ways in which they, at the time, made sense of those experiences. In Chapter five, I discuss their experiences of post-separation abuse, and the interventions by others that helped or hindered their efforts. My conclusion, Chapter six, summarises my findings and sets out my interpretation of what they mean for women experiencing DVA. I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of my study, and make suggestions for further research in this area.

Chapter 1 Understanding Domestic Violence and Abuse

As I have indicated in the Introduction, and as I will elaborate in this chapter, I am critical of the traditional psychology literature because it tends to be individualistic, deterministic, and assumes causation (Henriques et al. 1998; Moghaddam 2006). It also suggests a universality of manifestations of DVA, and women's experiences. This body of knowledge sits within, and informs (though not without debate), a broader health and social science literature. Increasingly, feminists are interrogating these traditional understandings of DVA. They challenge their sexist bias, and advance women's lived experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge (Campbell et al. 2000), thus creating more sophisticated understandings. Here, using feminist poststructuralism as a critical lens, I review the health and social science literature on DVA. My aim is to uncover the discursive practices concerning professional and popular knowledge about DVA, and point to their consequences for policy and the ways in which we respond to this form of oppression. Interventions are important because they, in themselves, form a significant part of women's experiences, which may have the effect of either reinforcing or challenging the perpetrator's control.

The chapter begins by setting out the epistemological and ontological framework within which I conducted the study. Central to this framework is an understanding of the importance of language as the vehicle through which we construct and communicate our realities. The words we use to describe phenomena, and the labels we apply, are not neutral; they influence the ways in which any given concept is viewed. The various terms used to describe DVA, and the implications to which they give rise, are discussed. Having noted the issues most significant to this review, I then go on to examine traditional explanations for DVA. Although they are not always mutually exclusive, in that some writers draw on elements of both, they tend to fall into two main schools of thought. In individualistic explanations the problem, and thus the site of change, is located within either the individual or the dyadic relationship. Structural explanations look to the political, social and cultural structures of our world as the site of the problem and the focus for change. I then explore alternatives to these traditional understandings of DVA. Through a feminist poststructuralist lens, I aim to identify the aspects of abuse that are rendered invisible by the traditional gaze: its gendered nature; the broader context of violence against women; and the difficulty of distinguishing between what is 'abusive' and 'normal' intimate relationships. Having established some of the gaps in current understanding, and using the metaphor of a spotlight beam, I examine those aspects of DVA that are more, and less, visible.

The importance of language in feminist poststructuralist thinking

Two major aims for feminist poststructuralist researchers, writers and activists[6] in this field are to challenge the dominant representations of violence against women and girls that reproduce systemic gender inequality and to privilege the voices of those previously silenced. Language, and access to an appropriate vocabulary, are key to achieving those aims. For feminist poststructuralists, then, language is a necessary precondition for thought, and the central vehicle through which we construct our realities. It allows us to think about,

[6] By 'activists' I mean anyone who is actively working to improve the lives of women, whether they be practitioners, writers, or agitators for change.

and articulate, our experiences and who we are. In the following sections, I discuss the importance of language in the construction of meaning and in the construction of identity within this field of study, in order to clarify the critical lens through which I reviewed the literature on domestic violence and abuse.

The importance of language in the construction of meaning

Dale Spender, the feminist author of 'Man Made Language', notes that:

> *In order to live in the world, we must name it. Names are essential for the construction of reality for without a name it is difficult to accept the existence of an object, an event, a feeling (Spender 1998).*

In a world in which language is man-made, women's experiences can be rendered, literally, unspeakable. For example, 'marital rape' and 'sexual harassment', common forms of violence against women, were not recognised until these terms were coined by feminists in the mid-1970s (Brownmiller 1999), i.e. the point at which a language was created to describe the behaviours of which they were constituted. Jill Radford and Diana Russell (1992) go further in their discussion of the politics of naming abuse, and argue that it is crucial in developing a response to it:

> *Naming an injustice, and thereby providing a means of thinking about it, usually precedes the creation of a movement against it (p xiv).*

They claim that describing the killing of women by men, for example, is as old as patriarchy itself, but describing it in gender-neutral terms such as 'homicide' allows it to be rendered invisible. 'Femicide', the killing of women *because they are women*, explicitly names the behaviour and makes clear where the responsibility rests (Radford and Russell 1992). Although 'femicide' has not yet achieved the status of mainstream vocabulary, 'marital rape' and 'sexual harassment' are now established concepts, and campaigning has led to change (Gregory and Lees 1999; Trumble 2003). Largely due to feminist activism, in the UK, rape within marriage became a criminal offence in 1991; sexual harassment was criminalised in 1997.

The language used to describe any given phenomenon will influence how it is viewed, as well as the causal factors, i.e. the allocation of responsibility and blame (Policastro and Payne 2013) that are offered as explanations for it. Language can also bestow implicit, and explicit, assumptions about its significance. For example, use of the throwaway term 'a domestic' or, worse still, 'just a domestic', to refer to individual incidents of abuse, instantly minimises its seriousness (Bostock et al. 2009; Mullender 1996; Neale and Worrell 2010; Peckover 2014; Starmer 2011; Stephens and Sinden 2000; Stewart 2014). It is implicitly relegated to a less pressing category for intervention, and the repeated and escalating nature of the behaviour becomes hidden, as are the ongoing fear and dread in which victims are forced to live (Stark 2012b). Because it implies two people fighting rather than being part of a broader pattern of oppression of one person by another, the direction of, and responsibility for, the violence is obscured.

Terms such as 'spousal abuse', 'intimate partner violence/abuse', and 'family violence' also obscure the gendered nature of the violence, and its direction; i.e. men's abuse of their female partners. In a letter to The Guardian newspaper (2015b), a coalition of feminist activists responded to an earlier letter (2015a), in which the Crown Prosecution Service was

criticised for rendering male victims invisible in the title of its publication, "Violence Against Women and Girls, Crime Report 2014-15". The coalition suggested that:

> *In searching for recognition and then for justice and support for male survivors of abuse, it is a grave mistake to suggest taking gender out of the naming and analysis, and neutralising these crimes into Orwellian 'intimate abuse'. A failure to name and call out the abuse of power in these crimes is what kept them invisible for so long.*

As well as feminist engagement with mainstream terminology, there has also been discussion between groups of feminists about which terms best define women's experiences of abuse. For some, 'domestic abuse' is preferred because it encompasses the broad range of behaviours (physical, verbal, psychological, emotional, sexual, and financial) to which women are subjected. Others, such as Paula Wilcox (2006), suggest that we need to hold on to the term 'domestic violence' because it emphasises the seriousness of the physical harm done to women.

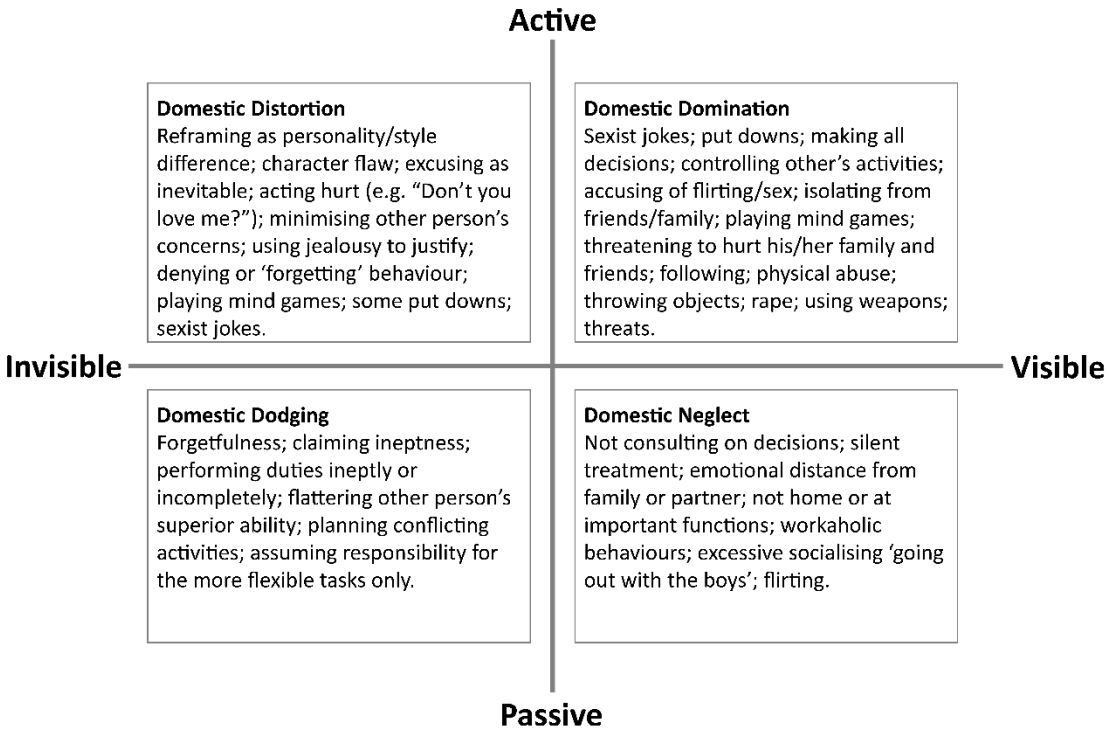

Figure 3: Matrix of Domestic Control (Ashcraft 2000)

Catherine Ashcraft (2000) argues that both 'domestic abuse' and 'domestic violence' constrain the communicative choices available to women by setting up a binary view, in which relationships are deemed either 'abusive' or 'normal'. Women are forced to choose between these labels, with significant costs attached to both; identifying their relationship as abusive carries an inherent stigma, but naming it 'normal' silences their experiences of abuse. Ashcraft proposes the development of a broader concept of 'domestic control', organised along two dimensions of perpetrator behaviour - visible-invisible, and active-passive (see Figure 3). 'Domestic distortion' (e.g. using jealousy to justify behaviour,

minimising the other person's concerns) is defined as invisible and active; 'domestic dodging' (e.g. performing duties ineptly or incompletely, planning conflicting activities) is invisible and passive. Visible categories are the active 'domestic domination' (e.g. put downs, making all decisions, controlling the other person's activities), and passive 'domestic neglect' (e.g. silent treatment, emotional distance). Once DVA is understood as a system of control, it becomes easier to see the connections to other forms of subordination, and the ways in which it is fostered and sustained by a larger system of inequalities. However, accepting the notion that DVA is a systemic problem would require people to acknowledge that abusive behaviours might well feature within their own families. Ashcraft (2000) suggests that because, for most people, this is an uncomfortable thought, they default to, and thus reinforce, the distinction between 'abusive' (not like us, othering) and 'normal'.

The categorisation of the various forms of abuse (sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, child sexual abuse, domestic abuse, etc.) experienced by women is helpful in identifying the specific behaviours – and essential for research that seeks to increase our understanding of those phenomena. However, assigning these behaviours to discrete categories also has the effect of obscuring women's cradle to grave experiences of male violence. Broader definitions such as 'violence against women and girls' have the political advantage of drawing attention to the scale, and thus the significance, of the issue. Narrower definitions of specific behaviours may increase clarity, but prevent generalisation to a wider population or range of related behaviours (Kelly 1988).

Language, then, is a necessary precondition for being able to conceptualise an issue, and shapes the ways in which that concept can be understood. In addition to its importance for naming the various elements of our world (objects, events, concepts, emotions, etc.), language is also significant in the formation of identity; it is this that will be addressed in the next section.

The importance of language in the construction of identity

A poststructuralist approach challenges the notion of an essential self, each individual consisting of a unique combination of personality characteristics that are relatively stable across situations and over time. Rather, our identities are seen to be multifaceted and fluid; they are constructed, negotiated and performed (Butler 1990; Foucault 1998), via language, in our interactions with others and according to the context in which those interactions occur (Burr 2015; Gergen 1991; Gergen 2009). Of course, power is rarely divided equally within these negotiations; this creates possibilities for the imposition of identities by the more powerful actors onto the relatively powerless, and sites of resistance to those impositions.

The ways in which the term 'victim' is used are seen as problematic by many feminists working with violence against women (see, for example, Copel and Al-Mamari 2016; McCleary-Sills et al. 2016; Murray et al. 2016). Firstly, the term has negative connotations of passivity and vulnerability, and obscures the very real work that women do to keep themselves and their children safe. Additionally, its status as a noun rather than an adjective has the effect of defining the person so called, by occluding their other identities. For example, a woman experiencing DVA may be a mother, daughter, sister, colleague, doctor or hedge fund manager. Referring to her as 'a victim' reduces and fixes her identity in a way that describing her as 'victimised' does not. For many feminists, the more positive and

agentive term, 'survivor', is preferred – although it is not one that is commonly acknowledged or used by the women so described (Robinson et al. 2015; Williamson and Serna 2018). I return to this issue in Chapter 2, where it is discussed in relation to participants, but I would question *any* label, applied by a third party without negotiation or consent, that defines an individual.

Language used in this thesis

Given the broad range of terms used to describe the concepts under scrutiny, I needed to be as inclusive as possible in setting the parameters of my literature search. I return to this topic in the next section, where I discuss my geographic inclusion criteria (the locations within which the studies were conducted). With regard to language, however, I used the following search terms: domestic violence OR domestic abuse OR intimate partner violence OR intimate partner abuse OR intrafamilial abuse OR intrafamilial violence. When focussing my search on particular sub-themes within DVA, I was similarly inclusive. For example, when searching for 'problematic substance use', I used: substance *use[7] OR drink* OR drug *use OR alcohol *use.

For the purpose of this thesis my use of language adopts the following format: where I am citing the work of others, for the sake of reporting accuracy I use the author's own preferred terms. However, when the views and arguments are my own, and when I am describing specific abusive behaviours, I apply the term that I consider to best fit the context in which it is used. For more general references to the range of behaviours that constitute this form of oppression, I use the term 'domestic violence and abuse' (DVA). When I am referring to male perpetrators in general, and defining women in relation to them, I use the term 'victim' to reflect what I consider to be their own dehumanisation of their female partners. However, in all other contexts I prefer to draw on what is negotiated and co-constructed knowledge rather than imposing an identity upon them; what I am able to *know* is that they are 'women who have experienced domestic abuse'.

To understand a concept, it is necessary to study both the concept itself and the systems of knowledge that produced it. In the next sections, I examine traditional systems of knowledge about DVA, unsettle those understandings, and explore alternative ways of conceptualising this form of oppression.

Traditional explanations for domestic violence and abuse

Traditional ways of explaining DVA can be arranged in two main categories; individualistic and structural understandings. Identification of these theoretical positions is important, because each approach has its own implications for the ways in which we respond to the issue. In individualistic explanations, the problem is located within either the person or the couple. In understandings that draw on psychopathology, the individual is seen as the site of change; characteristics or traits within the individual lead them to either perpetrate or be a victim of domestic abuse. Combined explanations draw on a blend of factors that are both beyond and under the control of individual agency; the intimate relationship is seen as the site of the problem, and the focus for intervention. In a structuralist view of DVA, the

[7] In literature searching, the asterisk * is a wildcard character that broadens the search to include similar words. Using the search term '*use', for example, generates results that include 'use', 'abuse' and 'misuse'.

problem is located in the political, social and cultural structures of the material world that we inhabit. The site of change is at the socio-political level rather than that of the individual or couple. These theoretical positions have significant implications for women experiencing DVA. They shape professionals' responses toward them, so have a direct effect on women, and these responses can either challenge or reinforce the behaviours of perpetrators.

Not least because I am critical of much of the health and social science literature, I needed to establish criteria for selecting the studies upon which I would draw. Inclusion of studies based on very different national contexts, for example, would have been at odds with my feminist poststructuralist perspective, which acknowledges the intersectional nature of women's experiences of DVA. However, using too fine a filter would have risked excluding significant numbers of pertinent studies and prevented me from drawing on those aspects of women's lives that are, indeed, more generalizable. Having weighed up these issues, I decided to limit my search to studies conducted in countries that have, in principle at least, a working liberal democracy with established principles of gender equality. In the countries represented in this literature review (USA, Canada, UK and mainland Europe, Australia, South Africa), women are not openly prevented from participation and leadership in government and civil society. The extent to which this participation is realisable in practice is, of course, a moot point, so the more nuanced understandings of gender equality are highlighted and discussed throughout.

The following sections set out in more detail and, through a feminist poststructuralist lens, critique some of the more prominent explanations for DVA offered in the selected literature.

Individual psychopathology

Second wave feminism of the 1960s in the USA, and 1970s in the UK, highlighted the scale and severity of domestic violence, reframing it as a political rather than personal problem. Prior to this time, if it was considered at all, it tended to be conceptualised in terms of psychopathology (Dobash and Dobash 1998), i.e. the notion that sick or evil individuals either perpetrate or are victims of this form of abuse. Despite a significant feminist literature that challenges this argument, individualistic explanations continue to be applied to the issue of DVA, and continue to influence responses to it. Mental illness, personal inadequacy and problematic substance use have all been proposed as causes of domestic violence; addressing these 'weaknesses' in individuals then becomes the solution. In the next sections, each of these 'causes' will be addressed in more detail.

Mental ill health

One explanation for domestic violence is that the perpetrator has mental health issues. Some recent studies suggest that depression, personality disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Chérrez-Bermejo and Alás-Brun 2014; Hahn et al. 2015; Kivisto and Watson 2015; Singh et al. 2014) and, in one case, insomnia (Singh et al. 2014), can lead men to perpetrate domestic violence. Chérrez-Bermejo and Alás-Brun (2014) studied 106 male prison inmates in Spain, all of whom had been convicted of gender-based violent offences. They claim that 25.5% of the inmates in their study had at least one psychiatric diagnosis upon entering prison – which suggests that 74.5% did not. In Hahn et al's (2015) American

study of 11,625 heterosexual men who reported being in a relationship, only 4% acknowledged perpetration of intimate partner violence (IPV) in the previous year – although self-reporting has been shown to result in response bias (Gibbons et al. 2011), so it is possible that the actual levels of IPV in this sample are higher than those stated. Kivisto and Watson (2015) followed 667 men with severe mental illness for one year post-discharge from acute inpatient psychiatric facilities in three US cities. Data collected from collateral informants (individuals drawn from the patients' personal networks, and with whom they had at least weekly contact) indicate that 24.6% perpetrated IPV in the first year. Again, this suggests that a far higher proportion (75.4%) were not violent toward their partners in the year following their discharge. Singh et al (2014) assessed the level of IPV perpetration in a nationally representative sample of American adult married or cohabiting men, and examined its associations with physical health, mental illness and substance dependence/abuse. The study found that men with irritable bowel syndrome, and insomnia, were more likely to be perpetrators of IPV but those with depression, post-traumatic stress disorders or anxiety disorders were not. Of the 530 men studied by Singh et al (2014), only 102 (19.2%) reported a history of IPV. Again, response bias needs to be considered, but a far greater proportion of participants (including those with identified mental health issues) did not report IPV.

These studies do not provide robust support for the theory that perpetrators of domestic violence are 'mentally ill'. Many of the perpetrators described above achieved scores well within the range of 'normal' on psychological tests [only Kivisto and Watson (2015) selected their sample from a psychiatric population], and the characteristics of perpetrators did not match the profiles of people with mental health problems. What these studies tend to ignore is the fact that many men (at least three quarters of the above cases) with mental health problems do *not* abuse their partners, and not all perpetrators have mental health issues.

Irresponsible media reporting (Steadman et al. 2015) has fuelled the notion that people with mental health issues are dangerous, yet those who have most contact with this group are the least likely to believe that they pose a threat (Jorm and Reavley 2014). People who are seriously mentally ill, i.e. those with schizophrenia spectrum and major mood disorders (O'Hare et al. 2016), are far more likely to be victims than perpetrators of violence (Choe et al. 2008; Eisenberg 2005) and, for those who are violent, the picture is even more complex. They are far more likely to be under 25 years old, although we know that domestic violence is perpetrated by men of all ages. Violent mental health patients are more likely to have multiple and complex problems (substance use, etc.) in addition to their mental ill health (Anderson and West 2011), and mental health staff are their most likely targets (Choe et al. 2008; Desmarais et al. 2014; Kocabiyik et al. 2015).

It has also been suggested that mental illness leads women to become victims of domestic abuse. Early studies took samples of women in mental health institutions, and asked their male partners about the cause of the mental illness (Dobash and Dobash 1992). However, these studies failed to take account of the fact that perpetrators were able to minimise or deny their partners' accounts of the abuse. More recent research has also suggested that mental ill health puts women at greater risk of experiencing domestic violence (Du Mont and Forte 2014; González Cases et al. 2014; Khalifeh et al. 2015). What these studies fail to explore is that the mental distress experienced by the women could have been a response to the abuse that they had endured. Indeed, far more research suggests that, for women,

domestic violence has serious mental health consequences (Ali et al. 2013; Campbell et al. 2006; Cerulli et al. 2011; Hegarty 2011; Holmes 2015; Humphreys and Thiara 2003; Karakurt et al. 2014; Lacey et al. 2013; Lacey et al. 2015; Lokhmatkina et al. 2013; Mason and Du Mont 2015; Pigeon et al. 2011; Salom et al. 2015; Sousa et al. 2015; Stöckl and Penhale 2015; Zahnd et al. 2011).

The implication here is that, if men have mental health problems and are violent toward their female partners, it is because they are unable to control themselves. If a woman has mental health problems and is a victim of domestic abuse, it is because she is unable to keep herself safe. Either way, the violence is constructed as an aberration; the 'antisocial behaviour' results from the mental health issue(s). The problem is located within the individual perpetrator or victim; the response, from this perspective, is to treat the mental illness with medication and/or therapy.

Simplistic notions of a relationship between mental health and perpetration of DVA serve to further problematize people with mental ill-health whilst, at the same time, directing attention away from the significantly larger threat of those perpetrators who do not have such a diagnosis. In the next section I discuss explanations that, whilst still pointing to individual psychological deficit, fall short of locating the cause in a diagnosable mental disorder.

Personal inadequacy

Some explanations for domestic abuse centre around the notion of personal inadequacy of either the perpetrator (Cowan and Mills 2004; Garbarino and Abramowitz 2009; Nevid and Rathus 2010) or victim (Abrahams 2007; Abrahams 2010; Hanmer and Itzin 2000; Hester et al. 2007). From this perspective, counselling is seen as the appropriate response to domestic abuse. Perpetrators are constructed as socially inept individuals who become dependent on their partners for emotional support. They feel threatened if she shows signs of increasing independence, and use violence to prevent abandonment. More recently, the language of 'personal inadequacy' has been replaced by the notion of 'cognitive deficit', in which domestic abuse is linked to inadequacy in the perpetrator's social information processing[8] (Buitelaar et al. 2014; Nedegaard and Sbrocco 2014), and a combination of cognitive deficit and alcohol abuse (Corvo et al. 2006). [Alcohol abuse is discussed in more detail in the next section on 'problematic substance use'.]

The notion of 'victim mentality' has been applied to women experiencing DVA, especially those who have experienced abuse in more than one intimate relationship. From this perspective, something (usually undefined) in the victim's behaviour invokes the abuse, and researchers have sought to identify characteristics common to this group. Low self-esteem, passivity, and external locus of control have all been shown to be associated with victimisation (Buzawa et al. 2007; Kuijpers et al. 2012). Kuijpers et al's (2012) Dutch study examined 156 female help-seeking victims of IPV, and Buzawa et al (2007) studied a cohort of U.S. domestic violence offenders and victims appearing in court. Thus, both samples consisted of women who had already identified as victims of domestic abuse at the point of being recruited to the research project. A weakness of these studies is that that there is

[8] The ways in which we receive information from our environment, make sense of it and then act on it.

little acknowledgement that the characteristics, identified post hoc, could be the *effects* of the abuse rather than the cause of it.

Lenore Walker drew upon Martin Seligman's theory of 'learned helplessness' (Peterson and Seligman 1983) to explain 'Battered Woman Syndrome'; women's seeming tolerance of domestic violence (Walker 2009). According to Walker, women who remain in abusive relationships do so because, after repeated unsuccessful attempts to leave, they begin to lose their 'escape skills' and, at the same time, develop extraordinary skills for coping with the abuse. Walker's work has been criticised for positioning women as 'helpless', but this is a misinterpretation of her argument. Far from suggesting that women were passively accepting their abuse, she was calling for greater awareness of the practical difficulties of leaving, and for women to be empowered to find safety.

A large body of research indicates that, rather than personal inadequacy, there are many barriers to leaving an abusive relationship. Not least of these are the strategies used by perpetrators; increased intimidation around the time when they are planning to leave, including threats to kill them and/or their children, is common (Harne and Radford 2008) - and very effective in persuading women that leaving is simply not possible. These messages are reinforced by regular and frequent news reports of femicide (in the UK alone, at least 124 women during 2016[9]) and domestic murder-suicides (see, for example, BBC 2014; BBC 2015a; BBC 2015b; Gayle 2015). If women do decide to leave they can face negative economic and social consequences, including poverty and homelessness, loneliness and isolation (Harne and Radford 2008). Women from marginalised groups face additional difficulties in terms of disability, culture/religion, immigration status and discrimination (Burman and Chantler 2005; Burman et al. 2004).

Problematic substance use

Historically, alcohol was considered to be a causal factor in domestic abuse and, despite most writers now referring to a relationship or association rather than a causal effect, these arguments still have currency today. Men's violence toward their partners is understood by some as a loss of control (see, for example, Corvo and Carpenter 2000; Lisco et al. 2015). From this perspective, men are considered to be 'naturally' violent, and domestic violence is explained in terms of disinhibition caused by their consumption of alcohol. Indeed, a popular brand of strong lager is commonly referred to in the UK as 'wife beater' (Wright 2012). Whilst one recent study (Feingold et al. 2015) found no significant effect of heavy episodic drinking or drug use on intimate partner violence, most studies indicate alcohol (Eckhardt et al. 2015; Holmila et al. 2014; Jewkes 2002; Mair et al. 2013; O'Farrell et al. 1999; Smith et al. 2012b; Stanley 2012) and/or drugs (Moore et al. 2011; Stalans and Ritchie 2008; Willson et al. 2000) as risk factors for domestic violence or, at least, accounting for the severity of the violence used (Leonard 2005). For proponents of this view, appropriate responses to domestic violence are anger management training and treatment of the problematic drinking and/or use of drugs.

Some interventions will address, at one and the same time, an individual's problematic substance use and their domestic violence - either as an integrated programme or as two

[9] Karen Ingala Smith collates information about women in the UK who have been murdered by men, and makes it available via her website, 'Counting Dead Women': https://kareningalasmith.com/2016/03/03/2016/.

parallel strands of support (Dalton 2009). However, these are driven by a theory that, left untreated, the problematic substance use will prevent the individual from fully engaging with the DV-related element of that intervention (Stalans and Ritchie 2008). Thus, men's abuse of drugs or alcohol is seen as the primary barrier to desistance of their violence.

As with the earlier arguments about mental ill-health as a risk factor for domestic violence, there is an interesting paradox operating here; alcohol is considered to increase men's propensity for violence but, if women drink, it is considered to make them more vulnerable to abuse (Devries et al. 2014; Fowler 2009; Holmila et al. 2014; Kail 2010; La Flair et al. 2012; Reingle et al. 2014). Similarly, women using drugs are seen to be at greater risk of violence from their male partners (Brewer et al. 2005; El-Bassel et al. 2005). Some more thoughtful commentators, such as Chuang et al (2012), Kelly (1988) and Warner (2009), argue that women's problematic use of drugs and/or alcohol is more usefully viewed as a strategy for coping with the abuse that they are experiencing; others (Davison 2007) suggest that it is both a cause of abuse and a coping strategy. In the more recent literature on abused women's problematic substance use, the term 'avoidance coping' (Flanagan et al. 2014; Weiss et al. 2014) is used uncritically – as though this phrase were not judgement-laden. The implication is that, rather than take positive steps to end their abuse women 'bury their heads in the sand'. Despite the extensively documented barriers to leaving (see, for example, Robbins et al. 2016), this language implicitly blames women for not exiting the violent relationship and for their chosen strategies for managing the abuse.

Most studies fall short of suggesting a causal relation between domestic violence and problematic substance use, instead lending support to an association between these factors. The way in which this happens, however, is highly gendered, and results in responsibility for the abuse being subtly shifted away from the perpetrator to either the substance being misused or to his victim. That he has choices about whether or not he drinks is often unacknowledged. Of course, she has choices too, but she has to choose abstinence to avoid victimisation and blame - both of which are imposed upon her. He can choose it to avoid being a perpetrator.

What is not explained by this approach is why some men with drug and alcohol problems are not violent toward their spouses, and that many men abuse their partners when they are not under the influence of alcohol or drugs (Atwood 1991; Galvani 2012; Harne and Radford 2008; Leonard 1999; Mirrlees-Black 1999). Furthermore, it does not explain why a female partner would be the sole victim of her spouse's violence; i.e. the perpetrator is what Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) describe as a 'family only' offender.

None of the studies mentioned here distinguished between situational couple violence, in which both partners in a relationship may resort to violence within the context of a specific argument, and intimate terrorism, in which the perpetrator uses violence as merely one tactic in a general pattern of oppressive behaviours (Johnson 2008). For example, Smith et al (2012b) use the term 'intimate partner violence' (IPV) to describe participants' behaviour, but note that 'a large proportion of violence in community-based samples tends to be mutual' (p239). Thus, they are more likely to be describing situational couple violence, and it is easier to see how problematic substance use might be a risk factor for this form of interpersonal abuse. However, perpetrators of intimate terrorism are highly controlling (Johnson 2008). They do not use violence indiscriminately; they are very selective about who they assault, and where and when the assaults occur. They do not attack their employers or other authority figures, and seldom assault their peers. They only abuse their

partners, and only within the privacy of the home. Many take great care to ensure that their violence leaves no visible signs and research has shown that, far from being 'out of control', perpetrators become more calm and controlled as their aggression increases (Brandl 2000; Dobash and Dobash 1998; Gottman 2001). These strategies require a great deal of self-control, which would be harder to maintain under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

The relationship between problematic substance use and domestic violence is thus far more complex than much of the literature suggests. Whilst there is no conclusive evidence of a *causal* relationship, the higher prevalence of domestic violence in drug and alcohol populations does, at least, indicate an association. However, this can be because the problematic substance use offers the perpetrator an excuse for their violence (Dalton 2009; Wright and Wisconsin Clearinghouse 1982). As Javaid (2015), in his study of the role of alcohol in intimate partner violence, concludes:

> *…it does offer the offender a 'shield', which allows them to identify themselves not as a 'violent abuser' but rather as someone whose drinking can lead them to do things they otherwise would not do (p88).*

As with mental ill-health, explaining DVA as an outcome of problematic substance use shifts the focus away from the perpetrator and onto either the drugs/alcohol or his victim. It also leaves unexamined the far greater number of cases in which problematic substance use is not a factor.

The explanations discussed so far point to individual psychopathology as the reason why some people perpetrate, or tolerate being a victim of, abuse. However, the way in which this is done is gendered. Whether mental ill health, personal inadequacy or problematic substance use, the blame is shifted away from the male perpetrator and onto either the particular psychopathology or his female victim. In the next sections, explanations that point to more than one factor are examined. The focus here is on the relationship within which the abuse occurs, rather than the individuals engaged in that relationship.

Combined factors

In this section, explanations that draw on a combination of factors are discussed. The first two of these draw on evolutionary psychology, and propose that socialisation and biology combine to produce perpetrators and victims. I then discuss the explanations that point to socialisation and intrafamilial relationships as the site of the problem.

Biologically/psychically deterministic

Sociobiology

Evolutionary psychologists such as Wilson and Daly (1993) suggest that, in order to control their own reproduction and realise their nepotistic interests in the welfare of joint offspring, men need to prevent other men from mating with their partners. 'Male sexual proprietariness' (Daly and Wilson 1988), i.e. jealousy borne of a sense of ownership of their female partner, is seen as the dominant motive in DVA. Since 'parentally investing males can be fooled about paternity' (p521), aggression is used to ensure their female partner's fidelity. Sociobiological explanations look to an aggressive gene, and the expression of

innate drives that have been repressed. Violence occurs when men lose control of those urges. Men receive messages from wider society that it is appropriate to control your female partner, and violence is merely one tactic with which this control is enforced. Fear of provoking that violence prevents women from attempting to leave the relationship.

Whilst male sexual proprietariness goes some way towards accounting for DVA, it does not explain how the perpetrator's nepotistic interests in their offspring are realised. The abuse actively prevents mothers from nurturing the children of the relationship (Casanueva et al. 2008; Pels et al. 2015), and children are often physically harmed during (and always emotionally harmed by) attacks on their mothers (Hester et al. 2007; Huang et al. 2015; Humphreys and Stanley 2006; Olaya et al. 2010).

At the extreme end of the spectrum of DVA, possessiveness and jealousy have been shown to be central to the thinking of men who murder their female partners. In evolutionary psychology terms, this is explained in terms of loss of control, 'not primarily cold-blooded "disposals" but the tip of the iceberg of coercive violence' (Daly and Wilson 1988). In an American study, Jacquelyn Campbell (1992) examined 28 such men and found that two thirds were jealous, and had a history of physically abusing their partners. Most were not intoxicated at the time of the murder. David Adams (2007) studied 31 men in the USA who had murdered their female partner. He identified 78% as 'the jealous type': preoccupied by jealous thoughts; made jealous accusations of her infidelity; and closely monitored and/or stalked her in an attempt to confirm his suspicions. However, Adams is sceptical of the men's claims that their abuse was motivated by these suspicions. In many cases, according to friends and family of the victim, the suspicions only existed in the minds of the perpetrator. Some have suggested that, rather than an extreme loss of control, the murder of female partners and ex-partners is a response to her attempts to leave the relationship; the outward expression of the mindset, 'If I can't have you, no one else will' (see, for example, Dobash and Dobash 2015; Gregory 2011; Gregory and Milroy 2010).

Social-cognitive theorists point to two factors that influence the likelihood of experiencing jealousy: when the rewards derived from the relationship are threatened; and when a person's self-concept or self-regard is challenged by an either real or imaginary rival (Harris 2003). Michael Johnson (2008) goes further, and has suggested two subtypes of intimate terrorist, with subtle differences in the way that jealousy operates. 'Dependent' intimate terrorists have high levels of emotional dependency and jealousy. Their obsession with their partners, and their desperation to hold on to them, motivates their jealous and controlling behaviour. 'Antisocial' intimate terrorists control their partners not because they are obsessed with them but because they have an inflated sense of entitlement, and will use any means necessary to ensure that they remain in control. These arguments are far closer to feminist understandings, in which possessiveness and jealousy are manifestations of men's socially constructed desire for oppression and control. Catherine Ashcraft's (2000) model of domestic control is useful here because it offers a fresh way of conceptualising the jealous behaviours of abusing men. The language of 'domestic distortion' renders these 'invisible' tactics, which are active rather than passive, visible. Applying this framework allows men to be seen as, rather than motivated by jealousy to protect their reproductive alliance and sense of self, deploying culturally available notions of the *legitimacy* of jealous behaviours to increase and maintain their domination of their female partners.

Paranoid-masochistic relationship

One of the more problematic and commonly held views is that women are, fundamentally, masochistic; they like to be dominated by men, and enjoy pain. This discourse is drawn upon, particularly in the psychotherapeutic literature, to explain why a woman might be attracted to an abusive man and, once in an abusive relationship, why she stays with him rather than leave. Jule Nydes (2013) suggests that 'paranoid-masochistic relationships' is a more accurate term for describing the earlier construction of 'sado-masochistic marriages' (Beckmann and Junker 1973; Grand 1982; Grumet 1967; Reynolds and Siegle 1959; Snell et al. 1964), which has been used to explain women's victimisation at the hands of their abusive partners, and why they remain silent about their abuse (Grihom 2015; Miller 2013; Stein 2012; Young and Gerson 1991). Nydes (2013) and Robert Mendelsohn (2014) use the term 'paranoid-masochistic' to describe couples in which:

> *The masochistic character appears to renounce 'power' for the sake of 'love'; and the paranoid character appears to renounce 'love' for the sake of 'power' (Nydes, 2013, p474).*

Early theorising about women who stayed with violent/abusive men suggested that they masochistically desired or provoked their partners' abuse (Storr 1968; Storr 1977). Whilst the frame of the debate has changed, with the emphasis shifting from individual women to their intimate relationships, these early representations have pervaded the literature on violence against women, and informed later conceptualisations of women as, for example, 'personality disordered', or 'co-dependent' (Boonzaier 2014). Although current constructions of paranoid-masochistic and sadomasochistic relationships are more sophisticated than the earlier understandings from which they have evolved, they are fundamentally problematic for the same reasons. For Nydes (2013), for example, the 'love' to which he refers is a dependent love that affirms weakness and the need for care and protection. Feminists, such as Susan Brownmiller (1975), have challenged the notion of dependent love in which a woman needs a man to protect her from other men. The basis for these challenges is that women are in fact at far greater risk from male partners than from men in general.

The Freudian (1991) notion of women as masochistic is difficult to untangle from the 'romantic' discourse of 'being swept off one's feet' by a 'knight in shining armour' and carried off – a powerful discourse reflected in, and reinforced by, many of the folk tales upon which people are raised. Steve McCrea (2012) uses the term 'cultural training' to describe the way in which children's fairy stories, folk tales and popular films, etc., reinforce these messages. In Cinderella (Perrault 2013), for example, pursuit is romantic rather than predatory, and a young woman is rescued and lifted above her station by a man of power; in Beauty and the Beast (de Beaumont 2015) a young woman is abducted and kept prisoner but, ultimately, falls in love with her abductor and helps him, the 'bad boy', become good.

The masochistic female identity that is created in psychotherapeutic accounts helps to construct abuse as desired by the victim and/or the product of a dysfunctional relationship, rather than attributing it to the behaviour of the individual perpetrator. This renders men's abusing behaviours unavailable for challenge; whilst the spotlight is focussed on the supposed deviancy/deficiency of abused women, perpetrators are able to hide in the shadows created by its beam.

Male jealousy and female masochism are sociobiologically deterministic explanations for DVA. Both of these notions are further reinforced by the cultural cannon of folk tales on which individuals are raised. His jealousy and domination become evidence of his care for, and commitment to, his female partner; facets of a 'normal' heterosexual relationship. The issue for women, then, becomes about degree; determining what level of behaviour is healthy, and in knowing how to distinguish between acceptable and abusive behaviours. The space between these two positions is taken up in more detail later, in the section on 'Discourses'. I now turn to explanations that focus on the family as a system within which abuse can occur.

Familial/systems/situational explanations

Recognising that DVA occurs within relationships, and thus requires both 'victim' and 'perpetrator', the family has been identified as a site for scrutiny. The term 'cycle of abuse' has been applied in two different ways to describe the processes of domestic violence. In the first of these, the 'cycle' denotes the behaviours within a dyad; in the second it is used to describe 'intergenerational transmission' of abuse. Both are discussed below, as is the notion of conflict between family members.

Cycle of abuse

One theory of domestic violence, developed in 1979 by Lenore Walker, is that the physical assault is part of a cycle stemming from the ways in which men are socialised. Cultural norms that actively discourage men from showing their emotions result in a build-up of anger and frustration. Once the tension becomes too great, he explodes and lashes out at his partner. This releases the tension and, on reflecting on his 'outburst', he expresses remorse for his actions. His partner acknowledges his contrition and they enter a 'honeymoon period' until the tension builds again (Walker 2009).

In common with the other explanations discussed so far, a major implication of this approach is that women are blamed for the abuse. They are implicitly charged with spotting the build-up of their male partners' tension, avoiding the triggers for his anger and frustration, and for removing themselves in time. Furthermore, it is not supported by women's accounts of their abuse. Most women do not experience a build-up of tension; the tension is ever-present, and punctuated with often apparently unpredictable violent episodes (Burkitt and Larkin 2008; Dobash and Dobash 1998; Johnson 2008; Sallinen and Kukkurainen 2015; Stark 2009). Also, it fails to explain why many perpetrators are not violent in other contexts (Dobash and Dobash 1998; Dutton 2007; Johnson 2008). From a feminist poststructuralist perspective, other possible explanations for these 'outbursts' can be explored, i.e. the extent to which they are intentional and premeditated behaviours motivated by a desire to control one's female partner. These explanations are taken up later, in the section on 'Alternative ways of understanding DVA'.

Based on Albert Bandura's (1963) work, social learning theory of abuse also draws on the notion of a cycle. Proponents of this view suggest that domestic violence can be transmitted from one generation to the next. Parents provide gender role models for their children, who witness the abuse. Boys observe their fathers' behaviour being rewarded (by quick cessation of the conflict) in the absence of negative consequences, and grow up to imitate their father's violent behaviour; girls grow up to tolerate being abused. There is some supporting

evidence for greater tolerance of domestic violence in adults who, as children, were exposed to parental abuse (Black et al. 2010; Ernst et al. 2006; Kurtz et al. 2015; Ogland 2011; Rich et al. 2005; Vézina et al. 2015). However, the implication that such children are 'inevitably bound for a violent future themselves' (Humphreys and Mullender 2002) has led to the model been criticised for being overly deterministic. No studies show that all adults perpetrating or experiencing domestic have grown up in violent households – and many report that more than half of their respondents did not (Baker 2012).

Although there is some support for an intergenerational pattern of abuse, the extent to which findings are consistent appears to vary according to gender. Some studies indicate an association between women as victims or perpetrators of domestic violence and their childhood experiences of abuse (Black et al. 2010; Franklin and Kercher 2012; Kerley et al. 2010), whilst others have found no association (O'Leary and Curley 1986; Pagelow 1982; Telch and Lindquist 1984). The findings for males are more congruous, and indicate a relationship between boys experiencing abuse and their subsequent violence towards women in adulthood (Edwards et al. 2014; O'Leary et al. 1994; Rada 2014; Wareham et al. 2009).

The literature suggests that boys exposed to parental DVA are more likely than boys not exposed to become adult perpetrators. However, it also shows that most of those exposed to DVA will not perpetrate DVA in their own adult relationships. Furthermore, it does not take account of mediating factors, such as children's own support networks, their awareness of the deterrent effects of criminal justice interventions, or capacity to forgive abusing parents (Rivera and Fincham 2015; Song et al. 2015a; Sutton et al. 2014), that protect them from simply modelling the behaviour of the same sex parent. The notion of an intergenerational transmission shifts the focus to the previous generation of parents, and obscures men's responsibility for the abuse.

Family conflict

In a conflict theory of family violence (Witt 1987), the family unit is seen as a source of conflict for its members. Abuse is explained as resulting from dysfunctional ways in which individuals interact, manage their disagreements and solve problems. Within the context of specific arguments between couples with poor communication and problem-solving skills, the conflict escalates into violence. The response, from this approach, is to provide family therapy to explore the triggers for the violence and help them to learn more prosocial ways of resolving disputes.

The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus 1979), widely used in quantitative studies of domestic abuse, is underpinned by family conflict theory – and has been criticised for ignoring gender and power dynamics within the family (Dobash et al. 1992; Kimmel 2002; Sillito 2012a), i.e. the context in which violence occurs. Conflict theory is predicated on an assumption that both partners contribute to the violence, and have equal power within the relationship. Yet women rarely use violence in heterosexual relationships and, when they do, it is most often in response to their partner's violence (Johnson 2006; Johnson 2008; Johnson and Ferraro 2000).

A London borough recently announced that it was to pilot specialist couples counselling sessions in an attempt to tackle domestic violence. A spokesperson for the Council justified the scheme thus: 'If the abusers understand the impact their behaviour has on their family,

we hope they can change'. However, later in the same interview, she went on to say: 'Victims are sometimes too scared to come forward and report it, or don't know how to' (Townsend 2015). This, for women's groups and feminists more broadly, is the danger of family therapy approaches. Whilst they may be helpful in addressing situations in which both individuals in the relationship are using violence when conflicts between them escalate, they are a dangerous response to intimate terrorism. Victims are already terrified of their abuser; placing them in an environment in which, for the therapist(s), equity between the parties is assumed puts them at even greater risk. In the unlikely event that women speak up about their experiences during the session, they risk further violence from the perpetrator once it has ended; if they stay silent, their views cannot be taken into account – and the perpetrator remains in control of the process.

Individualistic explanations, then, point to individual psychopathology or a dysfunctional relationship as the reason for the abuse. However, the way in which this is done is gendered. The spotlight is shone upon either the individual's psychopathology or the interaction between two individuals. What remains unexamined in these accounts is the perpetrator's responsibility for the abusive behaviour. They serve to shift blame away from the male perpetrator and onto his female victim.

Thus far, the explanations discussed point to either individual psychopathology, or a combination of factors: biology and socialisation, the dynamic of a dyadic relationship, social learning, or a manifestation of intrafamilial conflict. In these explanations, certain individuals or intimate relationships are seen as the site of the problem and intervention. These are powerful arguments for a number of reasons. They position the actors in particular ways; perpetrators are seen as hapless individuals who, due to the overwhelming influence of their particular psychopathology or the dynamics of the relationship, are unable to control their own behaviour, and victims are held responsible for their own victimisation. These arguments also shape policy; that, in turn, determines practice responses – which reinforce these positionings. Furthermore, they overlook the larger numbers of cases in which the same psychopathologies or combination of factors do not lead to DVA, and leaves unexamined those cases of DVA in which the psychopathologies are not present. When the spotlight beam is so narrowly focussed, the wider aspects of the stage are rendered invisible. In the next section, the focal length of the beam is shortened to increase the area that it illuminates. The discussion moves from the individual or dyad to the broader societal context in which they exist, and explores structural explanations that have been offered for DVA.

Structuralist explanations

Structuralist explanations for DVA tend to overlook individual agency, and suggest that the power of wider socio-political forces influences men to abuse. In this section, social and financial disadvantage and the patriarchal structure of institutions are discussed.

Disadvantage

Poverty, unemployment, lack of education and secure and affordable housing have all been proposed as predictors of domestic violence (Cunradi et al. 2000; Cunradi et al. 2002;

Jewkes 2002; Khalifeh et al. 2013; Lemaitre Ripoll et al. 2014; Powell 2008; Sanz-Barbero et al. 2015; Zhu and Dalal 2010). From this perspective, violence is understood as a reaction to the stress of living in poverty and, with it, the threat to positive male identity. Poorer men have fewer resources with which to manage their stress, and are thus more likely to use violence as a strategy for regaining a sense of control.

There is a gap in the literature on abuse in wealthy couples, and structural accounts do not explain why affluent and educated men also perpetrate domestic violence. For example, George Carman, QC, was charging his clients up to £10,000 a day whilst being extremely violent and abusive to each of his wives (Carman 2002); Charlie Sheen was, in 2010, the USA's highest paid TV star when he was convicted of assaulting his wife, Brooke Mueller (Black 2010); in the same year, Mel Gibson, reportedly worth $425 million, was found guilty of assaulting his wife, Oksana Grigorieva; and, in 2012, highly paid TV star Dennis Waterman admitted that he had abused his wife, Rula Lenska (Guardian 2012). Sporting hero Oscar Pistorius claimed to be earning £313,000 a year[10] when he shot and killed his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp (Alexander 2014) in 2013.

It has been argued that, in more affluent circles, there is a 'culture of silence' surrounding abuse. The signs are less likely to be noticed by others around them, and victims' claims to have experienced domestic abuse are more likely to be met with disbelief, making it far more difficult for them to seek help. If they do attempt to leave, their high-income partners are able to assemble 'legal dream teams' to wage endless and frivolous law suits (Weitzman 2001), and mount a campaign against them. As part of this campaign the abused woman is often stripped of all her financial resources and, if the couple have children, she is forced to engage in a lengthy and painful custody battle (Shapiro 2013).

Clearly, not all men from lower income groups are abusive toward their partners but, given the greater visibility and professional scrutiny of disadvantaged and vulnerable populations (Goldson and Muncie 2015), we would expect to see higher rates of reported crime in this group. Furthermore, men of higher socio-economic status (SES) are able to use their affluence and power to dissuade professionals from probing, and are less likely to be criminalised when they do offend (Pitts 1988).

Here, gender and SES intersect to create 'blind spots' in societal understandings of, and responses to, the problem (Sokoloff and Pratt 2005). DVA perpetration by wealthy men is excluded from our theory. When the spotlight is only shone in certain areas, and upon certain people, at certain times and in certain places, the explanation for abuse then becomes self-perpetuating.

Patriarchy

Feminist explanations of domestic abuse draw attention to the gender and power inequality in heterosexual relationships resulting from the patriarchal structures of society, and its reinforcement of notions of male dominance. Rather than pointing to individual 'deviancies', they focus on the social conditions that reinforce gender inequality and male privilege. Whilst radical feminists view male privilege and power as residing in physical superiority and aggression and the resulting social arrangements, for socialist feminists, that

[10] Oscar Pistorius claimed this in court, during his trial. Local sports agents speculated that, if advertising contracts and endorsements were to be taken into account, the value would be four times that amount.

privilege and power is located in the major institutions and structures of a capitalist society in which a male world view is represented and reproduced. Thus, for socialist feminists, women are oppressed by both capitalism and patriarchy. Although there are varying emphases within different strands of feminism, all feminists argue that women's inferior status is maintained and reinforced within, for example: the family, workplace, church and legal system.

Regardless of their employment status, women do most of the unpaid and under-valued work of caring and domestic chores in the home (Almeida and Bograd 1991; Malos 1995; Messing 2011; Murray and Powell 2009; Oakley 1975; Oakley 1990). They are more likely to be employed in insecure, temporary and low-paid jobs, receive less financial reward than men for work of equal value, experience harassment from male colleagues, and are given fewer opportunities for advancement (Clarke 2011; Fitzgerald and Ormerod 1993; McLaughlin et al. 2012; Samuels 2003; Shuler 2003). In most religious communities, the husband's authority over his wife is sanctioned and maintained, and teachings about the sanctity of marriage can undermine her attempts to escape abuse (Ferraro 1996; Haaken et al. 2007; Hajjar 2004; Pleck 1987; Stotland 2000). Whether seeking justice when wronged, or on the receiving end when lawbreaking, women in the legal system are treated more harshly, and have poorer outcomes, than men (Carlen and Worrall 1987; Griffiths 2000; Hanmer and Griffiths 2000; Kennedy 2005; Lees 2000).

For feminists, men's use of violence is understood as intentional patterns of behaviour that are socially produced, legitimated and sanctioned; violence is constructed, learned and rewarded behaviour. They challenge the silencing of women's voices[11]/experiences (Oakley 1981; Roberts 1981; Stanley 1990), the failure to hold perpetrators accountable and the tendency to blame victims for their own abuse (Policastro and Payne 2013), and argue for major social and cultural change.

Feminist theory has been criticised for failing to adequately explain abuse within same-sex relationships, and women as perpetrators of intimate partner abuse (Coleman 2003; Dutton 2007; Island and Lettelier 1991; Letellier 1994; Ristock 2004). In response to the first of these criticisms, Sara Scott (1994) has suggested that same sex domestic abuse does not 'disprove the existence of patriarchy'; she argues that it is a subcultural issue within which heterosexuality still provides the dominant model. The strongest responses to the question of female perpetrators have been with regard to their number, relative to that of male perpetrators. In 2013/14, according to the Office for National Statistics (2015), one in three women and one in seven men had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16. Sylvia Walby (2017; 2014) and Andy Myhill (2017) have argued that the gender disparity is far greater than these figures suggest. They have called for changes to be made to the current methods of recording violent crime, which, as I noted in the introduction to my thesis, grossly understate the proportion of crimes against women. Walby notes that official estimates of violent crime are based on capped data, in which multiple incidents of the same type of crime against the same individual are reported to an arbitrary maximum. In England and Wales, series crime is capped at five incidents per victim. Removing this cap results in a 70% rise in the figures for violent crime against women (Walby et al. 2015). Thus, whilst some women are undoubtedly abusive toward their partners, the idea that they are

[11] Most recently, via 'trolling' – online trivialisation of women's arguments and use of threats of violence. See, in particular, Zoe Quinn and 'GamerGate': http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/dec/03/zoe-quinn-gamergate-interview.

equally abusive is not borne out by the statistics; DVA is an overwhelmingly male-perpetrated crime against women.

Donald Dutton (1994) argues that domestic abuse is not simply caused by patriarchy, but by a combination of social and psychological variables. He suggests that not all men abuse, even in the most patriarchal of societies, so there has to be something operating at the level of the individual that makes some men abusive and others not. Implicit in his argument, though this is not stated (he more appropriately says that there is no evidence of abuse for the majority of men), is that most men *do not* abuse their female partners. However, a lack of evidence of abuse does not necessarily mean that men are not abusive, and Dutton fails to address the claim that violence tends to be used when other methods of control fail to work (so, most men in patriarchal societies do not *need* to use violence). Some of the more subtle methods used to control female partners include: denying them a voice by dominating conversations with them, and reinforcing their 'inferior' status through patronisation (Cameron 1992; Cameron 1998; Lakoff 1975; Lakoff 1990; Speer 2005; Spender 1998; Weatherall 2002); making unilateral decisions about what does, and does not, happen within the relationship (Dryden 1999; Falbo and Peplau 1980; Xiaoling et al. 2006); and withholding, or demanding, sexual activity (Gavey 2005). The evidence in these studies is taken not from abusive relationships but from couples in the general population. Thus, it seems that the difficulty is not in understanding what makes only *some* men abusive but in distinguishing between abuse and normalised behaviour within heterosexual relationships. Many cultural influences, from the folk tales and myths on which people are raised to the media to which they are exposed, reinforce heteropatriarchy[12]. The dominant gender discourses of 'man as breadwinner' (with all its implicit expectations and privileges), and 'woman as homemaker', provide the perfect cover for abuse.

Individualist theories of DVA have had an important and enduring impact on policy, professional, academic and lay discourses, which are of fundamental significance to my study. However, structuralist explanations have been central to feminist thinking and the women's movement as it relates to DVA. Arguably, the most significant gain resulting from feminist challenges has been the creation and reinforcement of a discourse in which violence against women can be conceptualised as a serious social problem rather than a 'private matter between individuals' or 'normal'.

Thus far, I have reviewed traditional approaches to understanding DVA. In so doing, I have focussed on particular themes, because I wished to uncover the dominant discourses shaping women's experiences of DVA. The legal and policy frameworks, the nature of therapeutic interventions, media representations and popular understandings exert a powerful influence on the ways in which women, and perpetrators, are constructed and treated. Individualistic explanations suggest that DVA occurs when men lose control and/or women invoke the abuse. Structural explanations suggest that certain men have little choice but to abuse, or that it is socially constructed and rewarded behaviour. Traditional ways of thinking about DVA continue to influence research, policy and practice but, more recently, alternative understandings have begun to emerge. It is to these ideas, influenced by feminist poststructuralism, that I now turn.

[12] Heteropatriarchy is the socio-political system in which gender and sexuality intersect. Male gender and heterosexuality have primacy over women (and other genders), and other sexual orientations.

Alternative ways of understanding DVA

In this section, I shorten the focal length of the spotlight beam to illuminate the broader stage on which DVA is performed. I begin by discussing a shift away from viewing it in terms of a series of discrete incidents, to a conceptualisation of it as a *process* by which perpetrators seek to oppress and control their victims. I then point to the way in which the implications of gender (i.e. that men are the primary perpetrators, and women the primary victims) are being hidden. I discuss this in relation to the literature on 'gender symmetry' in DVA, the notion that men and women are equally abusive. Having established the ways in which men's far greater responsibility for DVA has been obfuscated in the literature, I go on to discuss the main strategy, that of isolating their victims from support, used to achieve their aims.

As outlined earlier, feminist poststructuralists view language as a precondition for action. An illustration of this is the significantly increased research interest in 'coercive control' (see, for example, Broughton and Ford-Gilboe 2016; Callaghan et al. 2015; Crossman et al. 2016; Katz 2016; Levine and Fritz 2016) since it was defined by Evan Stark (2009; 2012b). Stark (2009) argues that, by viewing domestic violence as a series of discrete incidents, we fail to capture the cumulative and corrosive effects of living within an abusive relationship and overlook the more subtle behaviours that gradually erode women's sense of self. In focussing on physical injury, and basing judgements on the severity of assaults, we are framing domestic violence as akin to the more conventional forms of (most commonly, male to male) assault. Stark argues that coercive control is far closer to crimes such as kidnapping or hostage taking, and that we should be paying attention to the freedoms that are *taken away* from women as well as what is done to them (Stark 2012b). More than straightforward violations of her bodily integrity, coercive control prevents her effective exercise of citizenship (Manjoo 2016) and violates her human rights not to be held in slavery or servitude, or subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (United Nations 1948). The tactics used by perpetrators involve those designed to hurt and intimidate (i.e. coercion), and those used to isolate and regulate (control), their victims.

Coercive control is now included in the Home Office definition of domestic abuse, and 'controlling and coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship' has been criminalised under Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act (2015). These changes have been met with mixed reactions, however. For example, feminist writer and journalist Julie Bindel (2014) has argued that we do not need further laws to protect women; we simply need to utilise more effectively those that already exist. She notes that the Protection from Harassment Act (PHA) has not been properly used in cases of domestic abuse and suggests that, in reality, it will be almost impossible to prove coercive control in a court of law. Women's Aid Federation of England has taken a different view; they welcome the new law, and suggest that it 'redefines what is acceptable in relationships' (Neate 2015).

Whilst maintaining some scepticism about the political will to act on these changes, I consider them to be positive. Stark's (2009; 2012b) elucidation of coercive control, and the recent legislation that criminalises the behaviours of which it is constituted, present significant opportunities for furthering our understanding of, and improving our responses to, domestic abuse. The advances will undoubtedly add to the momentum in highlighting the more insidious ways in which women are oppressed within abusive relationships. Of course, the problem remains as to how we distinguish between normalised behaviour within heterosexual relationships and abuse. However, as identified in the Introduction, one

of the aims of my study is to contribute towards an illumination of coercive control mechanisms. Having established the utility of conceptualising DVA as a process by which perpetrators oppress their victims, I now turn to the issue of gender symmetry and unpick claims that men and women are equally abusive.

The UK Government's definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

> *Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional.*

Controlling and coercive behaviours are defined as follows:

> *Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.*
>
> *Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim (Gov.UK 2013).*

This definition was developed to take account of the fact that men as well as women, and same-sex partners, can be victims of domestic abuse. However, the problem with collapsing all forms of intimate partner violence under one heading is that the scale, severity and motives for the violent behaviour become hidden. Michael Johnson (2004; 2006; 2008) argues that one can distinguish four major patterns of intimate partner violence:

- *Situational couple violence* (SCV) is not connected to a general pattern of control, and involves one or both of the partners lashing out at each other within the context of a specific argument;
- *Violent resistance* (VR) involves one partner reacting with violence to abuse from the other;
- *Mutual violent control* (MVC) can be described as a form of mutual combat. Johnson (2004) suggests that this form could be viewed as "two intimate terrorists battling for control";
- In *intimate terrorism* (IT), the violence is merely one tactic in a general pattern of controlling behaviours, both violent and non-violent.

In their review of the domestic violence literature, Johnson and Ferraro (2000) note that:

> *…it is rife with studies that claim to show that partner violence is gender symmetric, if not perpetrated more often by women than men, continuing to leave readers with the impression that men and women are equally abusive (p950).*

They argue that this comes about because much of the literature does not differentiate between intimate terrorism, which is essentially perpetrated by men; situational couple violence, which is perpetrated slightly more often by men than by women; and violent resistance, which is perpetrated more often by women than by men.

Johnson's typology is useful for two reasons. Firstly, it removes the 'white noise' created by the inclusion of other forms of interpersonal violence, and exposes the gendered and chronic nature of intimate terrorism. Research consistently shows that, when the focus rests on sustained abuse that is designed to control a partner, DVA consists mainly of violence perpetrated by men against women (DoH 2005; Hester 2013; Myhill 2015; Smith et al. 2010; Walby and Allen 2004), and that its impact on women is greater (Ansara and Hindin 2011; Sillito 2012b; Stark 2009; Westmarland and Hester 2007). Female victims are more likely to be injured, more likely to be frightened, more likely to be repeatedly abused and more likely to be murdered (Corradi and Stöckl 2014; Smith et al. 2012a; Stöckl et al. 2013). Male perpetrators are far more likely than female abusers to abuse post-separation (Hester et al. 2007); indeed, this is the most common high-risk situation for female victims (Campbell et al. 2007; Humphreys and Thiara 2002; Lees 2000). Secondly, Johnson's typology provides a framework within which the various responses to DVA can be evaluated. Conflating SCV, VR, MVC and IT is dangerous because the dynamics of power operating in each of these forms are different. Failure to make these distinctions can lead to inappropriate responses from agencies. At best, this results in little or no improvement; at worst, women (and, by implication, their children) are placed at even greater risk.

The gender-neutral definition given by the Home Office obscures the scale and gendered nature of the behaviours that constitute DVA. It also occludes the historical antecedents, giving rise to a view of women as property, and belief structures which support the view that a man has the right to discipline his wife. In contrast to the UK's definition, and recognising that the overwhelming majority of victims are female, Article 3 of the Council of Europe (Istanbul) Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence defines these terms as follows:

> *(a) 'violence against women' is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life;*
>
> *(b) 'domestic violence' shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim (Council of Europe 2011).*

The Convention was ratified by the Council of Europe in 2014, and offers a way of understanding abuse that avoids some of the gender-blind approaches inherent in UK policy and practice. While being a signatory to the Treaty since 2012, it was not until December 2016 that the UK Government ratified it. The Bill received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017, and is now enshrined in the Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence Act 2017. This is a positive step but, given that existing legislation is not always enforced (Bindel 2014), its effectiveness remains to be seen. Despite the scale of the problem, and the burden it places on the UK economy, there has been little political will to take the issue of violence against women more seriously. Indeed, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies (2014) note that domestic abuse is a priority on paper but not in practice. They state that none of the statutory agencies is responding effectively, and much of the blame for abuse is placed on victims. Similarly, UN special rapporteur Rashida Manjoo has criticised the UK's lack of 'a consistent and coherent approach to tackling

violence against women' (Manjoo 2015; Manjoo 2016). In her report for the United Nations Human Rights Council she noted as of particular concern: the impact of swingeing cuts in public spending; the devolution of power to local authorities (which has led to open tendering, short term commissioning, and the resulting loss of specialist expertise); and the shift from gender-specific to gender-neutral language. As noted in the Introduction, all of these have serious implications at national, local and individual levels. Having established the importance of viewing DVA as a process of oppression and foregrounding gender in the analyses and responses, I now go on to discuss the main strategy by which it is achieved.

A common feature of male to female abuse is isolation of the victim, and clearly it is easier to control someone who has limited or no access to other forms of support. This isolation is achieved over time by damaging, or destroying, her relationships with family, friends, and other contacts. In my work with women experiencing domestic abuse, I am interested in their reflections on this process and, in Chapter 4, 'Identity theft: Living with abuse', examine it from a feminist poststructuralist perspective drawing on Erving Goffman's (1968) work on 'total institutions'. Goffman's work still has contemporary relevance, especially when applied to women experiencing DVA. He uses the term 'mortification' in describing the attacks on identity and self that occur in 'total institutions' such as mental hospitals, prisons, and concentration camps. These attacks take the form of: loss of contact with the outside world, ritual degradation, the removal of possessions, and lack of control. Hannah Hale noted similar tactics being used during the initial training period of new recruits to the military including verbal abuse, deprivation, being pushed to one's limits physically, and being 'immersed in uncertainties and circumstances that are out of their control' (Hale 2008). As she goes on to say:

> *... they are suddenly immersed in a world that is totally unfamiliar to them and in which they have lost all cultural elements that had until now maintained the construction of their civilian identities (Hale 2008, p316).*

Whilst the 'rupture', or break in their ordinary experience, that Hale describes is not experienced suddenly but over time by women in abusive relationships, their abusers achieve this rupture by adopting many of the same tactics that Goffman describes. Many of these tactics are subtle, and difficult to name as abusive. The perpetrator's motive can elude the victim and those working to support her, not least because of the lack of access to more positive emancipatory discourses about heterosexual relating (Hollway 1995).

Stark's (2009) concept of coercive control is important because it moves forward our understanding of the nature of DVA and the means by which it is accomplished. Johnson's (2008) typology of intimate partner abuse provides a gendered reading of coercive control that counters the ever-present danger, noted in relation to individualist approaches, to blame the victim. Neither concept, however, seems to offer what individualist theories do, that is, an explanation for why particular men abuse women. Patriarchy, like individualist theories, does identify a cause for abuse, albeit locating the cause in the pervasive power of social arrangements rather than individual men. By identifying the nature of the gendered power imbalance in heterosexual relationships, the concept of patriarchy opens the way for the more detailed consideration of the way this plays out in coercive control. Feminist structural explanations of women's social and economic disadvantage help to identify the enabling conditions for abuse in the lack of support for women experiencing DVA which, in turn, makes them more susceptible to isolation and control.

In the next section, I discuss feminist poststructuralist thinking on the discourses that sustain heteropatriarchal relations. This body of thought seems to offer the most complete and convincing explanation in that it deals with shortcomings identified in my meta-analysis of the literature reviewed to date. Feminist discourse analysis builds on structural explanations by delineating the social and political contexts within which discursive practices of knowledge about DVA are created and sustained. The logic of the poststructuralist approach is that I am able to demonstrate how women's experience of DVA, as well as its perpetration, and the law, policy, professional practice governing responses, are shaped and controlled by the discourses that purport to explain it.

Discourse

Language is the vehicle by which we co-construct our knowledge of the world and our notions of selfhood and identity. However, it is structured in particular ways. Discourses are sets of meanings; ways of representing particular events or subject positions. For example, Wendy Hollway (1984) identified three dominant and gendered discourses in heterosexual relations. The 'male sexual drive' discourse asserts a notion of male sexuality as produced by a biological drive to reproduce. Men are seen as sexually incontinent, and unable to control these urges. The 'have/hold' discourse, its name taken from the phrase used in traditional Christian wedding ceremonies, draws on ideals of monogamy, partnership and family life; in this discourse, women's sexuality is thrown into sharp relief by an emphasis on the relationship with the man and their children. The 'permissive' discourse is, in principle at least, available to both men and women. Within it, the precept of monogamy is challenged; sexuality is seen as completely natural and should not be repressed.

Hollway's work is important because it points to the ways in which we are able to think about, and speak about, heterosexual relationships. It shows the gendered nature of these ways of communicating, and the constraints on what it is possible to think and say. For example, the male sexual drive discourse is not available to women as subjects, so women do not tend to talk about, or think in terms of, being 'driven by uncontrollable urges to have sex'. Although the permissive discourse is notionally available to women, a double standard operates in that there are significant risks and consequences to drawing upon it that men do not face; 'slut-shaming', the social stigma applied when they violate traditional expectations of sexual behaviour, is a lived reality for women and girls (Harvey and Gill 2011; McRobbie 2009; Ringrose et al. 2013). The terms 'slapper' and 'whore', for example, are negative identities that are imposed on 'loose' women. For men, the nearest equivalent is 'sowing his wild oats'; an altogether more positive term that draws on the male sexual drive discourse. Thus, discourses both structure and delimit the ways in which it is possible to speak about particular concepts.

Heterosexual women experiencing DVA, which is carried out within the context of intimate relationships, are also constrained by the discourses available. The aforementioned binary of 'abusive' or 'normal', and the costs in terms of identifying as a 'victim of abuse', leave women with little choice than to construct their relationships, in the earlier stages at least, as something other than abusive. In the absence of discourses that construct the perpetrator's behaviour as controlling, women tend to draw on dominant romantic discourses to explain his behaviour. For example, pressure to withdraw from family and

friends is not seen as an oppressive attempt to isolate but as an expression of his feelings for her: 'because he loves me so much, and wants me all to himself'.

Once women begin to understand their relationship as abusive a further set of discourses are available to them, but these also place constraints on the ways in which they are able to communicate their experiences. The dominant discourse of DVA assumes physical violence to be the only legitimised form of abuse, and the only one that is damaging. For women subjected to abuse that does not include physical violence, their experiences are rendered invisible. Those for whom violence is a feature of their relationship can struggle to communicate the other forms of harm (emotional, psychological, sexual, financial, etc.) done to them.

Other people also draw on available discourses when encountering women experiencing DVA. Marianne Hester (2011) notes the competing demands made of mothers experiencing DVA when they come into contact with professionals. She points to the three different 'planets' on which agencies exist: those working to support victims of domestic violence; those responsible for child protection and safeguarding; and those whose focus is maintaining post-separation contact between the child(ren) and the absent parent. On the 'domestic violence planet' the dominant discourse is of supporting and empowering adult (mainly) female victims of (mainly) male violence and abuse. Although children are recognised on this planet, they are not the primary focus for intervention. The focus on the 'child protection planet' is the protection of children from significant harm, with an emphasis on mothers as main carers being responsible for ensuring this. Mothers' impaired functioning, as a direct result of the abuse experienced, and personal safety are seen as secondary to the safety needs of the children – and there is little understanding that these will hamper her safeguarding ability. Rather, mothers who struggle to meet the demands of child protection professionals are constructed as 'failing to protect' their children (Devoe and Smith 2003; Humphreys and Absler 2011; Moulding et al. 2015; Strega et al. 2013). On the domestic violence and child protection 'planets', the emphasis is on preventing further harm; on the 'child contact planet', professionals focus on the future relationship between the (usually) father and his children. It is a rights-based discourse within which a presumption of contact is central – despite a significant body of evidence showing men's use of child contact arrangements to continue their abuse of women and children (Elizabeth et al. 2012b; Harne 2011; Holt 2011; Thiara and Humphreys 2015). The father-child relationship is foregrounded, domestic violence 'disappears', and mothers who challenge professionals' decisions are problematized, and punished.

Despite the clear contradictions outlined in Hester's (2011) Three Planet Model, and the difficulties they create for women attempting to keep themselves and their children free from abuse, dominant discourses in most professional settings tend to hold women responsible, if not for the abuse, at least for not taking more positive steps to end it (Danis and Lockhart 2003; McDonald 2005a; Virkki 2015). What remains invisible in these discourses is the machinations of the perpetrator, whose abuse has caused his female partner's impaired functioning and compromised the safety of their children. This invisibility allows mothers to be positioned as active in 'seeking out' violent partners and for somehow provoking the abuse, and yet as passive 'helpless punch-bags' (Monckton-Smith 2014) or masochists who accept it. They are thus constructed as 'having asked for it' (Boonzaier 2014), and therefore blameworthy.

Very little has been written about how *women* define violence and abuse. In order for a woman to identify as a victim, she has to first consider her experience to be beyond what would be deemed normal/acceptable behaviour and, second, to define it as abusive. Before accessing support/services, she needs to be able to specify the particular form that her abuse takes. She then needs to avoid becoming ensnared by the various discourses, noted here, that operate at the level of professional interventions.

Nicola Gavey (2005) has pointed to similar limits on women's choices in her study of (hetero)sex, and argues that there is a blurred line between rape on the one hand and 'just sex' on the other. She notes that most men and women may well be able to distinguish between acts of rape and consensual sex, but:

> *…this distinction overlooks a whole realm of sexual experience that falls uncomfortably into the cracks between these two possibilities (p2).*

Historically, the only discourse available was one in which male sexual force and female sexual passivity were constructed as natural and, because a woman's consent could always be called into question, this provided 'the perfect cover story for rape' (Gavey 2005, p5). In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist activism led to the coining of terms such as 'acquaintance rape', 'date rape' and 'marital rape', and this gave women a language with which to begin to question some of these taken-for-granted assumptions. Although Gavey concedes that advances have been made in thinking about heterosexual relations, she suggests that power still operates to compromise women's choices. For example, the coital imperative that renders everything other than penetration of the vagina by the penis as not 'real sex' limits the ways in which heterosexual sex can be conceptualised and, in the absence of direct force, women can struggle to name their experiences of unwanted sexual activity as rape or sexual assault.

Gavey provides a feminist poststructuralist analysis of the discourses and practices that shape women's experiences of heterosexual sex. She points to the various ways in which they are coerced into having sex, i.e. the behaviours that fall between 'rape' and 'consensual sex', and notes their difficulties in communicating those experiences. She argues that these discourses and practices operate as the 'cultural scaffolding of rape'.

As noted earlier, a similar dynamic appears to be operating at the level of intimate relationships more broadly; the language and discourses available to women constrain the communicative choices available to them by offering only a binary view in which relationships are deemed either 'abusive' or 'normal'. Gavey's model provides a useful lens for examining the space between these two opposing descriptors, the space within which the significance of understandings and practices becomes blurred. I am arguing that the dominant discourses on heterosexual intimate relationships, and the practices of which they are constituted, operate as a cultural scaffolding of DVA. For my study, this opens up possibilities for examining and learning from participants' routes into abuse that does not require them to be positioned as blameworthy. For women more generally, it provides a space in which the precursors to abuse are made visible, and thus available for challenge.

Evan Stark (2012b) notes that, up until recently, coercive control was 'invisible in plain sight'. He suggests that, because many of the behaviours that make up this form of oppression revolve around activities already identified as those traditionally carried out by women, it is not always easy to distinguish them from those considered to be 'normal' within heterosexual relationships. For example, common features in my own experience of

working with women experiencing domestic violence and abuse are obsessive cleaning and time-keeping. Having exacting standards of cleanliness in the home and insisting that meals are served at precise times can be explained as individual biases that women comply with (or may even desire in their own right). According to Stark, coercive control only becomes visible when meeting these demands is seen to be motivated by fear of the consequences of not doing so.

Conclusion

In selecting and reviewing the literature in this chapter, I have pursued my aim of highlighting its gaps and weaknesses, and unsettling dominant understandings of DVA. Feminist scholarship helps to illuminate the oppressive ways in which women experiencing DVA are positioned in both traditional and contemporary explanations for abuse in the health and social science literature. In particular, a feminist poststructuralist approach highlights the way in which the embedding of these explanations in political, professional and popular discourses affects the potential for women to act as agentic beings as they enter, endure and escape DVA. This review has also sought to demonstrate not just the oppressive power of discourse on women but the ways in which it obscures the actions of perpetrators.

I am using the metaphor of a spotlight to explore the perpetration of DVA by men against women, and the ways in which this is understood and responded to. When a spotlight rests upon an otherwise dark stage, its brilliance renders starkly visible the area on which it shines. Our eyes are drawn to this part of the stage, and we focus on what we can see within the beam. However, the brightness of the beam also casts a deep shadow that encircles the illuminated area; activity that takes place beyond the beam eludes our gaze, and the distance of the viewer from the stage determines the level at which this can be studied.

I am arguing that, under this spotlight beam, certain aspects of DVA are illuminated whilst others are rendered invisible. From a distance, the aspects that are rendered invisible are the gendered nature of DVA, and the broader range of behaviours that constitute violence against women. From a closer vantage point, the focus on physical assault as the only legitimate form of DVA and individualistic understandings obscure the wider range of ways in which men harm their female partners, the difficulty of distinguishing between ‘abusive’ and ‘normal’ intimate relationships, and men’s responsibility for the abuse.

I suggest that men exploit this stage direction and, using a feminist poststructuralist lens, am shortening the focal length of the spotlight beam to expand the area that it illuminates. This renders visible the broader context in which perpetrators, and their victims, operate. As he, over time, erodes her ‘space for action’ (Westmarland and Kelly 2013), she is attempting to make sense of and, later, extricate herself from his abuse. Illuminating the wider context in which this is played out allows for a closer analysis of the more insidious behaviours that entrap and oppress women, and those interventions that help her to escape.

Within the DVA arena, individualist explanations are more or less deterministic in terms of identifying those external and internal forces that shape behaviour. The interventions to derive from these explanations, however, do not position individuals as passive victims of these forces. Rather, human actors are seen to have the potential to respond actively to

them and change their behaviour. By contrast, whilst structuralist explanations are similarly deterministic, interventions tend to be pitched at bringing about socio-economic and political change in ways that can arguably obscure the significance of individual human agency.

Feminist poststructuralist explanations combine structure and agency by identifying both the constraining forces of dominant discourses in relation to DVA and the spaces available to individual women for challenge and change. In shortening the focal length of the spotlight beam, I draw on the work of Nicola Gavey, Catherine Ashcraft and Erving Goffman. Gavey's (2005) concept of cultural scaffolding allows for an examination of the space between 'normal' and 'abusive' in intimate relationships, and the difficulties of distinguishing abuse from normalised male heterosexual behaviour. Using Ashcraft's (2000) Matrix of Domestic Control renders visible, and thus available for scrutiny, the broader range of perpetrator tactics (visible and invisible, active and passive) designed to control victims. Drawing on Goffman's (1968) work allows an illumination of the process by which this is achieved. Isolating women from their actual, and potential, support networks, and constructing the home as a 'total institution', facilitates the process of mortification. This gradual dismantling of women's previous identities enables perpetrators' complete domination of their victims.

In the next chapter I will discuss the methodology I developed in order to chart the journeys taken by the women participating in this study and to bring the actions of perpetrators into sharper focus. I am interested in what women say, when they feel safe to report, about the range of behaviours, both violent and non-violent, that they experience, and how the abuse is maintained.

Chapter 2 Methodology

I set out to explore the processes by which heterosexual women enter, endure and leave abusive relationships, the kinds of control mechanisms available to perpetrators, and the ways in which use of those mechanisms might shape women's experiences. Having reviewed the existing literature on DVA, and thus provided the context within which my study sits, I now set out what I did. I begin by detailing and clarifying the ways in which my methodological approach has informed my research design. Having outlined my feminist poststructuralist epistemological framework for this project, I then discuss the methods chosen to explore the topic, their ethical implications, and justify those choices. I note the ways in which power can operate in the researcher/researched relationship, and the steps I took to address its impact – both on participants, and on the research. I end the chapter by describing, and providing justification for, the process I undertook in analysing my data.

Methodological approach

The ways in which we think about DVA are subjective, and culturally bound. They are formed, and continue to be influenced, by a host of socio-cultural factors, the combinations of which are unique to each individual. This study is historically and culturally contingent in that the 'knowledge' I choose to present indicates the period, and society, in which I live – and my position (both societal, and political) within these frameworks. The account I give is presented from a feminist poststructuralist perspective. From this perspective, traditional psychology's claim to 'truth' is challenged in that any given account, including my own, is treated as a story or partial truth alongside other possible accounts. What is also challenged is its claim to neutrality, and its tendency to overlook the impact of culture, gender and the context in which any given phenomena occur (Burman, 1998). Our knowledge and understanding of, and attitudes towards, abuse cannot be separated from the social context in which it takes place. The language we use, the questions we choose to ask, or not to ask, will influence what we study - and what we find (Warner 2009).

I considered other theoretical schools before settling on my chosen epistemological approach to this work. My rejection of the notion of an essential self, and positivist conceptions of specific 'causes' of DVA, led me to consider postmodernism. However, the emphasis within this tradition is on challenging modernist notions of, for example, biological determinism; i.e. the idea that all women are at risk of DVA simply by virtue of being women. Postmodernism's interest is in the cultural mood; it points to the social construction of masculinity and femininity, and the ways in which this contributes to gendered violence. Feminist standpoint theory, for example, starts from the basis that, because women are better placed to understand certain aspects of the world, feminist social science should be practised from their standpoint rather than that of men or people more generally (Jaggar 2004). Thus, it tends to take the form of replacing modernist notions rather than unsettling them. However, drawing on social constructionist principles that 'denaturalise' what are really human-made concepts, poststructuralism goes further.

Whilst women might be better placed to understand and speak about the oppression of women, feminist standpoint theory pays less attention to the ways in which power operates in relationships *between* groups of women. Most feminist researchers are female, but tend to be socially privileged. A poststructuralist approach acknowledges that, because gender

intersects with social class, SES, education level and ethnicity, for example, not *all* women are necessarily better placed to explore women's structural oppression.

I am challenging individualistic understandings of DVA, in which the 'problem' is considered to be a deficiency that is located within either the perpetrator of abuse or his victim. A feminist poststructuralist approach allows for exploration that can take us beyond the surface of our culturally shared, common sense understandings of the world (Gavey 2011). Furthermore, viewed through this lens it is possible to identify aspects of DVA that can be obscured by traditional approaches; the gendered nature and direction of the abuse, and the subtler behaviours of which it is constituted, are rendered visible and thus available for challenge. Rather than personalising the political, which is a feature of individualistic approaches, it allows for the politicisation of the personal. Because I wished to highlight the more subtle workings of power and dominant discourses in my analysis of DVA, I considered poststructuralism to be the most appropriate approach.

Poststructuralism is, in its simplest terms, a response to and criticism of structuralism; that is, a rejection of the notion that any knowledge can really be 'objective' or that there are any universal truths about our world(s). Rather than discovering 'truths', as traditional psychology tends to do, poststructuralist thinkers are concerned with the disruption of dominant knowledges, and argue that everything that is known is contingent. Knowledge is socially constructed, via language, by groups of people in particular contexts, and with varying power relationships operating within those contexts. In acknowledging this, poststructuralism also creates spaces for that which has been rendered invisible by a structuralist lens.

Poststructuralists emphasise the importance of language in the construction of meaning. The concepts and categories used to understand the world are constructed through language, and can thus be seen as a form of social action (Burr 2015; Gergen 2009). Using different words to impart the same information can radically alter the 'knowledge' acquired and version of reality that is created. In addition, often what is not said is equally significant.

A feminist poststructuralist approach challenges the notion of universal categories such as 'woman', and emphasises the contingent nature of identity. It draws on the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 2005; Crenshaw 2012) to explain people's experiences and, particularly, women's experiences, i.e. the ways in which identities such as, for example, gender, ethnicity, nationality, race, age, sexuality and physicality, and the relative power that women possess within those identities, intersect to shape their experiences. From this perspective, each individual woman, due to her specific characteristics and context, will experience domestic abuse in a unique way. However, most feminist poststructuralists argue that women's lives are shaped by power relations that are embedded within a social construction of gender (Foucault 1979; Foucault 1998; Shields 1975; Shields 2016); thus, gender is centrally implicated in the patterns of disadvantage that extend across different social groups (Wendt and Zannettino 2015).

Although there is no simple feminist methodology, feminist research has certain key characteristics (Skinner et al. 2005). Its focus is gender and, in particular, gender inequality. It is democratic in that it rejects the traditional academic distinction between the researcher and her/his 'subjects', and seeks to enable women's and other marginalised groups' experiences to be heard and valued. It is overtly political in the sense that it seeks to illuminate, and provide robust evidence for, the voices and experiences of marginalised

groups. It openly acknowledges that the values and beliefs of the researcher will shape the process and output, that power operates within the researcher/researched relationship, and discusses these issues in relation to findings. My aims and objectives, set out in the Introduction, reflect these key characteristics of feminist research. Throughout this chapter, I will be discussing the way these aspects are reflected in my choice of research method and the way it was subsequently applied.

Another important aspect of feminist research is the close attention paid to the ethical implications of any investigation, and to the wellbeing of all parties involved. I worked within the Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS 2009) and Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS 2014). These implications influenced, and continue to influence, every aspect of this project. My research gives access to women's experiences of DVA and involves the researcher asking about, describing, and interpreting intimate and often painful aspects of their lives. This interaction affects both researcher and participants. The knowledge produced is then shared with an audience, who will be affected by, and do something with, what they learn. The potential for harm, to the researcher but, in particular, to participants and the group(s) that they represent, is present at each stage in this process; as such, my study is saturated with ethical issues (Brinkmann and Kvale 2008). My research proposal (see appendix A) was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Applied Social Research at the University of Bedfordshire in January 2011 (see appendix B for letter of approval) but throughout the design of the study, data collection, analysis and dissemination I reflected, and continue to reflect, on the possible consequences of doing this work. In the following sections I set out what I did, the dilemmas raised, and the ways in which I managed these issues.

Method

The epistemological and ontological underpinnings of my methodology, put forward in the Introduction and further developed in Chapter 1, led me toward a qualitative method for my research. An investigation in which humans are positioned as agentic beings rather than passive victims of forces beyond their control, and realities are understood as multiple and socially constructed rather than fixed, would have been constrained by quantitative methods. Indeed, educational researchers Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note the ways in which research question(s) can be constrained by the tools/methods used to address them. They note that research in the social sciences is, fundamentally, about people's lives and how they are lived and experienced. They express exasperation at the ways in which researchers' ideas can so easily become focussed on the *measurement* of participants' responses; initial interest in a topic too often can be:

> *…turned into manageable, miniscule realities by researchers; researchers' personal interests submerged for the sake of research precision (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, pxxii).*

Traditional psychology research, in its efforts to be taken seriously as 'scientific study', relies heavily on quantitative methods (validated questionnaires, for example). Whilst findings may be robust in 'scientific' terms, and may indeed be of value in highlighting important trends worthy of further investigation, this involves sacrificing the subtleties of the context in which the issues are experienced. In feminist research, the priority is to choose methods on the basis of their appropriateness for answering the research question, rather than

imposing a structure that omits or distorts aspects of participants' experiences. Quality concepts of reliability and validity are pursued in quantitative research but, for studies that have the purpose of generating *understanding*, these terms are not considered applicable (Stenbacka 2001). Whilst qualitative investigation needs to be purposeful and rigorous, research quality is better conceptualised in terms of 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity' (Lincoln and Guba 1986). These issues are addressed in the following sections, in which I discuss the decisions I made in advance of collecting my data.

Research Design

Meaning and interpretation lie at the heart of qualitative research (Flick 2009), and my aims and epistemological position made the study compatible with such an approach. My interest was in foregrounding women's voices as experts on their own experiences, and interpreting those experiences. I was conscious of the need to reflect on and be transparent about the dynamics of power within the research relationship and the influence of my own values and beliefs on these processes. Next, I discuss the steps I took to address these concerns and set out, in more detail, the design of my study.

Relationship between 'researcher' and 'researched'

Power within the research relationship is not fixed, but fluid; it is constantly shifting, and negotiated. I acknowledge, however, that the balance of power is weighted toward the researcher. Whilst I make no claims to have successfully managed these tensions in all instances, I did my utmost to counter their effects. In 'taking their autobiographies and becoming their biographer' (Cotterill and Letherby 1993), I took seriously my responsibility to reflect on my power, and my use of it, in relation to participants.

A key tenet of feminist research is an acknowledgement of the ways in which power operates within the research relationship. Power is neither equally divided between the researcher and the researched, nor static throughout the encounter (Connolly and Reilly 2007; Conti and O'Neil 2007; Easton 2005; Kadianaki 2014; Malpass et al. 2016; Sin 2007). Differences in the characteristics such as, for example, gender, age, race, ethnicity, physicality and socio-economic status between the researcher and the researched influence the ways in which they are relationally located. The social and interpersonal meanings attached to those differences, together with the specific context, shape the level of equitability within the research encounter. A researcher's privileged position (the nature of which is discussed below), relative to the researched, can be discursively dangerous by, for example, reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for (Fassinger and Morrow 2013; Scharff 2010). The role played by each party, i.e. 'researcher' or 'participant', will also shape their identity within the encounter and, thus, their relative power; these dynamics will, in turn, shape the experience, and the story that is co-constructed within the interview.

A manifestation of these issues in my study came at the beginning of my meeting with Kirsten, a young, white, working class mother of six children. Although she had willingly consented to participate, her initial manner seemed to me to be peevish and somewhat hostile. In this instance, I went to greater lengths than with other participants to tacitly reinforce her position as 'expert' in relation to my own. As she began to share her story with me, it became increasingly clear that her experiences of having been in local authority care

as a child, a 'teenage mum', and a 'victim' of domestic violence had brought her into contact with large numbers of professionals from a range of disciplines. Many of these, she felt, had patronised and infantilised her, thereby abusing their relative power within those relationships. Perhaps understandably, Kirsten may have considered that I would do the same. I suspect that her initial belligerence was her way of communicating to me that any expectation I might have had of deference from her, based on her perception of our relative differences, would be disappointed.

Some writers have emphasised the authority that the researcher has in the research process (Connolly and Reilly 2007; Letherby 2003; Sin 2007). Prior to data collection, the researcher decides where the interviews will be conducted, their duration, and the questions that will be asked during the fieldwork. During the stages of analysis and writing up, (s)he decides what will be included and what will not, what story will be told, and how individual participants and the groups they represent will be positioned. Later still, (s)he decides amongst whom, and how, her/his findings will be disseminated.

I may position participants as 'the experts' in that they have the knowledge I am attempting to access, but the role of researcher may be perceived by them to be one that implies status. I am a White British fluent speaker of English, working in a university setting. All of these are powerful cultural locations, which need to be acknowledged throughout the research process. Furthermore, accounts are produced within relationships (Burman 1998). In the act of providing participants with a voice I also have the power to misrepresent them (Lorde 1984; Scharff 2010; Willig and Stainton-Rogers 2008). I was keenly aware of these responsibilities, and have taken every precaution (for example, by building in time for researcher and researched to get to know each other before commencing data collection, by providing thorough and ongoing debriefing, and by giving careful consideration to what I do with their accounts and how they might be perceived by audiences when I disseminate) to ensure that my work does not result in any harm to participants. Details of how I did this are provided in section on 'data gathering' below.

Much of the advice on interviewing practice from a traditional perspective emphasises the need for emotional distance between the researcher and the researched (Connolly and Reilly 2007), and the boundaries between interviewing and counselling (Morrison and Stomski 2015); researchers are advised not to provide definitive answers to questions from participants, and to refrain from giving advice, information and reassurances. Ann Oakley (1981) argues that this defensive stance can be incompatible with a feminist perspective. Viveka Enander (2008) notes that, when speaking with women who had experienced DVA, her participants sometimes 'blamed themselves mercilessly' (p43) for the abuse to which they had been subjected. Whilst she acknowledges the importance of maintaining professional boundaries, on these occasions she did provide information, reassurance and support, and justified this by saying:

> *Even if it meant that I became 'therapeutic', anything else would have felt unethical, or simply cruel (Enander 2008, p44).*

Other feminist researchers have also felt compelled, for the same reasons, to provide information, reassurance and comfort to participants recounting traumatic experiences (Connolly and Reilly 2007). During my own fieldwork, there were times when I would have felt similarly callous had I not responded to participants' questions, and offered some sort of reassurance that their partners' abuse was unjustifiable.

Whilst over-identification with participants would have compromised my ability to be critical of the knowledge generated, being emotionally distant would also have been problematic. Too clinical an approach can be interpreted by participants as coldness and detachment; it enhances the power imbalance, and denies both the emotional nature of their experiences and the psychological cost of disclosure. Apart from the clear harm to women being interviewed, such an approach would have made them more guarded and potentially affected the quality of the data gathered (Oakley 1981).

Negotiating this space between over-identification with participants and aloofness was not straightforward, and there were occasions on which I came uncomfortably close to the boundaries. For example, the following excerpt shows how I interrupted a participant as she was comparing the levels of self-efficacy in her professional and personal identities:

> *Kamala: I can hold a conference I can tell you, "Next year", right, "OK, we need to make these cuts these cuts that cut", and I can hold it in the boardroom with twenty men, …OK but I couldn't control the one person at home*
>
> *Jo: but is that your fault*
>
> *Kamala: no it's not but I think my point was that… (Kamala, 14, 558-566).*

In a blurring of roles on my part, a desire to be supportive of my participant overrode my responsibility to hear her story, and effectively challenged her right to a voice on the matter. In this exchange, Kamala did continue with the point she was making but my interruption, albeit well-intentioned, might well have closed down her opportunity for so doing. A more structured approach to the interviews would have minimised the risk of blurring roles in this way. However, it is also possible that a more formal approach, with clearly delineated roles of 'interviewee' and 'interviewer', would have significantly reduced Kamala's opportunities for this level of reflection – and she may never have raised the topic at all.

Of course, the researched also have power within the research relationship. They decide whether or not to take part in the study, the extent to which they participate, what they are prepared to talk about, and whether or not to give truthful responses (Scharff 2010). The veracity of the accounts given by participants can be substantiated by similarities with those of other women within the same study, and within the research literature more generally (Warrington 2001), but, ultimately, they decide what, and what not, to share with the researcher. What participants say, how they say it, and what they do not say, is also influenced by their perceptions of the listeners. This, in turn, is based upon what the listeners have already shared in terms of their own hopes and expectations of the encounter. Participants can, at times, say what they perceive the listener wants or needs to hear; recount with relative indifference to listeners' expectations; or speak with the intention of challenging listeners' presumptions (Greenspan 1998). In order to minimise misperceptions about my beliefs, views and motives, I made time at the beginning of each first meeting for participants to learn something of my politics, and experience of working with DVA. This is discussed in more detail in the section on 'preamble' below.

As other researchers have found in their own studies [see, for example: Downes, Kelly and Westmarland (2014); Riessman (1994); Thiara and Humphreys (2015); Valpied et al (2014)], participants in my study declared altruistic motives for sharing their experiences. They claimed a strong desire to contribute to wider understandings of women's experiences of DVA, and benefit other women via the knowledge gained. I considered it part of my role to,

not only help them to do so, but also to offer them the opportunity to be involved in these processes. Fassinger and Morrow (2013) suggest that involving participants in this way communicates to them that they are honoured and valued beyond their contributions to the research. I have presented my findings to the groups from which participants were drawn, and asked for their feedback on presentations that I had prepared for conferences. I discuss this in more detail in the later section on Debriefing but, in adopting this relational approach, my aim was to position them as collaborators rather than simply 'the researched'.

Designing the research instrument

This study sought to examine the processes by which women enter, endure and leave abusive relationships, and the extent to which these processes are project managed by the perpetrator. To enable me to explore these issues, participants were to be asked to share their experiences of DVA, and their thoughts about the impact it had had on them and those close to them. I also wanted them to tell me about the support that they had received, and the problems they had faced when trying to access support, from within and outside their own personal networks.

My interest was in the cumulative and corrosive effects of living within an abusive relationship and the more subtle behaviours that gradually erode women's sense of self (Stark 2009), rather than the discrete incidents of which they are constituted. Therefore, I consciously avoided setting restrictive inclusion and exclusion criteria in terms of the topics covered. I also avoided the use of language, or framing of questions, that might have led participants in a particular direction (Cohen et al. 2007; Song et al. 2015b). For example, using the term 'abuse' rather than 'violence' served to reinforce the broader definition of oppression (see Introduction) with which I approached my enquiries. I developed a schedule of prompts (see appendix C) that would help to stimulate participants' narratives. The prompts consisted, as far as possible, of open questions such as: "How did you meet?" "Can you tell me what it was like in the early stages of your relationship?" "Can you tell me about the process of becoming aware that something was wrong in your relationship?" For each of these superordinate categories, there followed a number of subordinate questions designed to be used only if the participant seemed unsure of how to respond. For example, the question about the early stages of the relationship was designed to be followed up with: "If you were to have been asked the question 'Who am I?' what would your answer have been?" "How would you have described yourselves as a couple?" "What were his/your interests?" "Where did you live, and how was that decision/were those decisions made?" During the fieldwork, I rarely needed to ask these questions; the narrative style of the interviews meant that participants, for the most part, addressed these topics spontaneously when telling their story. However, the schedule was useful in helping me to organise my own thoughts (in advance of, and during, the interviews) and, very occasionally, in facilitating the flow of participants' narratives.

Using the metaphor of the spotlight to discuss visibility and invisibility, my thesis sets out the ways in which perpetrators of domestic abuse create and constrain the context in which women's identities are constructed. In-depth semi-structured narrative style interviews were conducted with women who had experienced DVA. I made a conscious choice not to speak with perpetrators directly involved with the women in my study. Firstly, there would have been significant barriers to recruiting them; locating the men, persuading them to

participate, and persuading the women to agree to this, seemed extremely unlikely. Secondly, I wanted to avoid colluding in their efforts to manipulate the 'story' that is told. The men who abused the participants in my study are thus only visible in terms of what their female partners say *about* them. A more traditional view might be that my research design, without any such triangulation, sacrifices reliability and replicability. However, consistent with a feminist poststructuralist research design, I am positioning participants as experts on their own experiences; including the voices of perpetrators, who routinely minimise, deny and victim-blame (Kelly 1988; Westmarland and Kelly 2013), would not have added to the authenticity of the results. My concern was to maximise the trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1988; Schwandt et al. 2007) of the study, which is entirely consistent with a qualitative approach.

This method chosen to interview women offered the best way of balancing the ethical demands of researching a sensitive topic with the temporal and economic constraints of an academic study. It provided a space in which participants could articulate their experiences, and optimised the degree of control they had over the recounting, within a timeframe that was manageable for them and for me. It minimised the unequal power dynamic and inflexibility that are features of structured interviews (Fontana and Frey 1994), and the risk with unstructured interviews of diversion from the focus of investigation (Gibson 1998).

In traditional qualitative research interviewing, data are generated via question and answer. The interviewer acts as facilitator, asking questions, and the interviewee is the respondent who supplies answers to those questions. Thus, the interviewer is in control of the information produced. (S)he selects the themes/topics for discussion, orders the questions in particular ways, and poses those questions using particular language. In taking a feminist poststructuralist approach, I am acknowledging, and resisting as far as is possible, the researcher's potential to influence the interview process. I wished to maximise participants' control of their stories, thereby enabling them to take me beyond my surface view of their experiences.

In order to facilitate a validation of participants' subjective experiences (Oakley 1981), I rejected a rigid question and answer based approach to data collection in favour of a more narrative style. In a narrative approach the interviewee is positioned as 'storyteller' rather than as a respondent, and is responsible for clarifying the meaning and relevance of what is being said (Greenspan 1998). The story is seen as a co-construction between the interviewee and the interviewer (Riessman 2008), rather than a neutral account of some pre-existing reality. The interview is:

> *…a type of discourse, a speech event: it is a joint product, shaped and organized by asking and answering questions (Mishler 1991, p67).*

The conversation is a 'discursive accomplishment' (Mishler 1991, p67); a dialogue in which the events and experiences are collaboratively rendered meaningful (Gubrium et al. 2012; Hydén 2014). The narrative interviewer seeks detailed accounts, or 'thick description'[13] (Geertz 1973), rather than brief responses or general statements – though the form this takes will vary according to the research question.

[13] 'Thick description' of a human behaviour is one that explains not just the behaviour, but its context as well, such that the behaviour becomes meaningful to an outsider.

Viveka Enander (2008) interviewed women about their experiences of DVA and notes that, in the early stages of her fieldwork, very little data of interest were generated. On reflection, she recognised that she was clinging too rigidly to her interview schedule, and was denying participants' need to tell their story, from the beginning and in their own way. Once she introduced a more narrative style to the interviews she was able to capture far richer and more meaningful data, and women spontaneously, and naturally, addressed all of her prepared questions. Having recognised this phenomenon in my own experiences of interviewing in previous studies, and the impact it had on the trustworthiness of the data generated, in this study I adopted a narrative approach. Rather than imposing an a priori researcher-led focus on the interview, I considered it important that participants felt able to disclose the aspects of their experiences that were most meaningful *for them*.

Participants come to the interview with their own preconceptions of what the researcher wants, and is able, to hear about their experiences (Greenspan 1998). I encouraged participants to provide a detailed composite picture of themselves at various key stages in their lives - i.e. before, during and after the abusive relationship. Adopting a narrative style during this encounter provided a space in which they could allow their thoughts to meander, and they could take a more reflexive approach to their narration. For example, Simone recalled that, throughout their relationship, her partner had given her clothing and jewellery. At the time, she had not questioned his motive in doing so and, during her interview, referred to it merely as one aspect of their lives together. Once she began to piece together the threads of our conversation, however, she began to reframe his generosity as one of the ways in which he may have been attempting to control her. As such, this process of musing gave me access to information that might not have been offered within a more traditional question and answer format; I was shown the shadows as well as the more illuminated aspects of participants' experiences.

Establishing at the outset that participant and researcher would be collaborators in the production of the story to be told, helped to set the parameters of an ethical research relationship (the way in which this was achieved is detailed below in the section on 'preamble'). First, however, I needed to identify and recruit my co-collaborators; it is to my strategies for so doing that I now turn.

Sampling and recruitment strategies

A poststructuralist approach, rather than positioning participants as 'passive victims', acknowledges their agency, as well as the interpersonal and social forces that will have delimited their choices and actions. Thus, agency is theorized as both actively constructed and structurally constrained. I set out to explore, through a feminist poststructuralist lens, the processes by which heterosexual women enter, endure and leave abusive relationships, the kinds of control mechanisms available to perpetrators, and the ways in which use of those mechanisms might shape women's experiences. I was seeking insight into, and in-depth understanding of, these processes. Participants would be selected on the basis that they would be able to provide information-rich data for analysis (Patton 2015). My inclusion criteria, determined in advance of the data gathering, were that participants should be heterosexual women with experience of DVA who would be in a position to reflect on the three stages of entering, enduring and escaping those relationships.

I wished to gather, as far as possible, a range of perspectives. As noted in the introductory chapter to my thesis, women's experiences, and the decisions made by them in order to cope, survive and escape the abuse, are influenced by demographic variables such as age, ethnicity, physicality and SES. Such factors combine in ways that are unique to each individual. My aim was not to generalise my findings to broader populations of women, a feature of quantitative research, but to maximise the breadth of experiences, and perspectives on those experiences, on which I could draw. This would allow me to interrogate and develop existing theory and, ultimately, provide a theoretical understanding that can be taken up by other researchers.

Seeking participants for a research study can be especially problematic when, by virtue of their experiences of the topic under scrutiny, they perceive themselves as members of a stigmatised group. Because of the stigma attached to having been a 'victim', women who have experienced DVA are less likely to volunteer to participate if they are asked by someone with whom they have no prior relationship. Those who would volunteer under these circumstances are likely to provide guarded responses, or only 'frontstage access' (Goffman, 1959; Miller, 2004), until a level of trust has been established with the researcher - and building this trust can take more time than the design of a study allows.

I had planned to use purposive sampling of women in contact with specialist women's services/projects, but also wished to go further. Using only this strategy may well have generated a sample of women that were 'out' in the sense that they not only acknowledged, but also were acknowledged as, having experienced DVA. It is also likely that they would have been in the early stages of their journey toward living abuse-free. Whilst their perceptions of living with abuse would be invaluable, my concern was that aspects of their narratives might differ in unanticipated ways from those of women not in regular contact with support agencies. For example, women's refuge populations may have experienced more visible forms of abuse than those not in contact with agencies providing refuge. I was also aware that that they might have had less time since separating from the perpetrator to reflect on and process their experiences.

Snowball sampling can enable researchers to gain access to individuals who live outside the boundaries of normative social behaviours and experiences (Browne 2005; Sadler et al. 2010), and is particularly useful when recruiting from minoritised populations (Fassinger and Morrow 2013). Experience of DVA, and the stigma attached to a 'victim' identity, positions women such that they can prove difficult to access unless approached by someone in whom they already have trust. I therefore planned a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. This strategy gave me access to participants from a wide range of backgrounds, and with a breadth of experience in terms of their abuse and responses to it. Having delineated my sampling strategy, I now describe the method chosen to recruit participants to my study.

I chose to use a combination of methods, drawing on my established relationships with local support agencies and snowballing, to recruit participants. I was conscious that some women may have been prepared, or even preferred, to talk to a complete stranger. Some participants were indeed, at our first encounter, complete strangers – but had been introduced to me by someone (friend, family member, or professional) in whom they had a great deal of trust, and who had in turn built up trust in me. Given the sensitivity of the topic, and the potential cost of disclosure, this seemed the most appropriate recruitment strategy.

One of the dangers of approaching women directly to request their involvement is that their abuser may find out. Ending the relationship does not protect women from the threat of further violence (Holt 2015; Sundari et al. 2016), and I made no assumptions as to their safety in this respect. For that reason, participants with recent experience of DVA were recruited via existing programmes running in women-centred organisations.

Another important reason for recruiting, where possible, from specialist agencies was that, should participants have required support over and above that which I was able to offer, they were already in contact with organisations equipped to provide this. Of course, any participant requiring support was to be provided with information about the services offered by their local agencies, and encouraged to contact them.

I have long-standing relationships with staff, and some service users, of Women's Aid in Luton and Luton All Women's Centre. I was introduced, via mutual acquaintances, to Stepping Stones[14] and Watford Women's Centre. Each of these four agencies operates a range of projects (for example, women only drop-ins, Freedom programme[15], parenting programmes) that involve working with women who have experienced DVA. All four agencies agreed to support my project and discuss it with women accessing their services. As recruitment to my study began, women were also invited to propose, and make an initial approach to, other women known to them who had experienced DVA. This generated additional participants to the study. In all, women were recruited via the aforementioned agencies, snowballing, and via my own professional networks.

Each woman approached, whether via the four agencies or by me personally, was provided with a summary of my research proposal (see Appendix A). This formed the basis of our first face-to-face conversation, where any initial questions or concerns were addressed. Had anyone not been willing to consider participating, she would have been thanked for her time and not approached again. Women were encouraged to take some time to think about it and then contact me for more information if/when they felt ready to do so. Two women, who had been approached by the agencies with which they were in contact, and with whom I had had only a brief telephone conversation, did not take up this invitation. They received a telephone message or email from me on only one further occasion. Both failed to respond, and I took this to be an implicit removal of consent; it seemed safer to assume that they no longer wish to participate, and we had no further contact.

Once contact had been made, and their willingness to participate had been established, women were asked how and at what pace they would like to proceed. They were offered a choice of venues for the interview(s), and assured that they would be in control of the amount of time they gave to the study.

Of the fourteen women who took part in my study, nine were introduced to me by the aforementioned agencies; three were professional acquaintances who, on learning about my research, expressed an interest in participating, and two were recruited via snowballing.

[14] Stepping Stones is a Luton-based charity that offers help and support to women affected by any drug/alcohol, domestic abuse, mental health and social care related issues.

[15] A programme designed to help women who have experienced domestic violence to remain abuse-free.

Participants

This study was designed to involve the collection and analysis of in-depth accounts of women's experiences of DVA. In considering the number of participants required to achieve trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1986), I was guided by the literature. Baker and Edwards (2012), in their review for the National Centre for Research Methods, note the paucity of explicit discussion in the qualitative research methods literature on 'how many interviews is enough'. They suggest that there is no 'right' answer to the question; an appropriate sample size depends on a combination of practical and methodological factors, such as the resources available and the epistemological and ontological principles that underpin the methodological approach chosen.

Because of the care and time needed to recruit to the study, and the detailed nature of the fieldwork and analysis, there was a limit to the number of participants with whom I could engage. Too small a sample would have limited what I was able to say about their experiences. Too large a sample would have been unmanageable within my timeframe, and would have reduced the level of care that I was able to take to ensure that women were not harmed by their participation. From my reading of the literature, I noted that most qualitative interview studies of the type I had planned appeared to have between five and twenty participants, with ten to fifteen being the most common sample size. Recognising the lack of evidence-based guidance for determining non-probabilistic sample sizes, Guest et al (2006) used data from a study involving sixty in-depth interviews to systematically document the degree of data saturation. They found that saturation occurred within the first twelve interviews. With this in mind, I considered that twelve participants would probably be sufficient for my study.

I planned for twelve participants but, in the event, fourteen women took part. I considered that, had a woman come forward only to be told that I had already achieved the 'required number' of participants, she might perceive this to be a rejection; being flexible about the number of participants meant that I did not have to risk causing anyone such discomfort.

Not everyone who expressed an interest in my study went on to participate. Four women, with whom I had (relatively distant) professional relationships, met with me to learn more about my project. I explained the in-depth nature of the data that I was hoping to collect, and asked them to give careful consideration to how their disclosures might impact on our working together in the future. I reassured them that confidentiality would be maintained beyond the life of my study, but stressed that I would not want them to feel uncomfortable at any point in the future about their participation. As with all the women who expressed an interest in taking part, I encouraged them to take a few days to consider before committing. Of the fifteen women with whom I discussed my study in detail, fourteen went on to participate; one, who was known to me via my professional networks, chose not to.

Because my study was designed to elicit 'thick description' (Geertz 1973), and I am fluent only in English, I needed to recruit participants who would be able to think and speak in English. Apart from the prohibitive financial cost of providing interpreters, their use in research studies is not straightforward. Translating speech from one language to another is not simply a technical task; it involves interpretation. That is not to say that narrative interviewing never involves interpreters, but their use has to be very carefully considered.

> *An interpreter is not an adjunct to a cross-cultural-cross language project, he (sic) is central to its success. It takes time and patience to learn to work with an interpreter…*

ideally he should be a bilingual, linguistic-cultural expert and colleague, in every sense of the word a confidante of the project (Werner and Campbell 1970).

The involvement of an interpreter would have influenced the outcome of the interviews and affected the data gathered. An interpreter needs to be a well-established person from the group in question – someone in whom the participant has confidence and with whom they would feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics. When researching male to female violence, it is difficult to know whether engaging an interpreter would be safe; someone from the same community may not be trusted by participants to refrain from judging the speaker or breaching confidentiality (Fassinger and Morrow 2013; Ingvarsdotter et al. 2012). Furthermore, not all vocabulary can be straightforwardly translated from one language to another. Whilst the use of interpreters may be appropriate when eliciting accounts of incidents, it is less straightforward when exploring more nuanced concepts such as perceptions of abuse.

The fourteen women with whom I worked reflected a wide range of characteristics in terms of age, ethnicity, physicality, socio-economic status and the length of time elapsed since their experiences of abuse. The amount of time they gave to the project also varied. The following table sets out the age and ethnicity (as defined by participants), and length of participation for each of the women who took part in my study.

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	No of interviews	Total hours
Carmen	38	African/Asian	1	0:56
Colette	49	White British	1	2:40
Eve	41	White British	1	0:48
Freya	30	White European	2	4:38
Kamala	47	Indian	1	1:48
Kim	40	White British	1	1:13
Kirsten	26	White British	1	1:31
Leonie	38	Black African	1	1:26
Marcia	46	White British	3	6:44
Naomi	34	White British	1	0:56
Nombeko	32	Black African	2	3:48
Olivia	46	White British	5	7:44
Ruth	42	White British	3	5:05
Simone	40	African	2	4:20
14			**25**	**43:37**

Table 1: Participants' age, ethnicity and length of participation

I considered providing more information in tabular form about participants, such as physicality, socio-economic status and length of time elapsed since their experiences of abuse. However, none of the additional characteristics lent themselves to this form of

unqualified presentation. Including them, purely for the sake of research precision (Clandinin and Connelly 2000), could have led to a misleading picture of participants. Similarly, I chose not to tabulate data on participants' relationships with the perpetrator of the abuse. The age at which women met their abusers, age differences between the abuser and the abused, and the length of their relationship are all factors in which the context is crucial to understanding. For example, a six-year relationship at eighteen years old with a man ten years older may have a very different significance to one of the same duration and age difference in one's thirties. Each individual would have come to the relationship with a unique set of circumstances that would shape each of their experiences. I therefore decided not to include here any additional characteristics of participants, or details of their relationships. These aspects of their stories will be discussed in my analysis chapters as appropriate.

I gave considerable thought to the issue of how to refer to participants when discussing my study. I was concerned that the use of numerical identifiers, e.g. 'interviewee 1', and nameless references, such as 'one woman said…', might have the effect of denying participants' humanity; using proper names, albeit pseudonyms, is more in keeping with a feminist poststructuralist approach. I had hoped that the women in my study would choose their own pseudonyms; this seems more empowering and respectful of participants than simply imposing a name upon them.

With one participant, this choice had to be negotiated. When asked to select her pseudonym, she suggested the name 'Oprah'. This would undoubtedly have created a particular image for the reader - of a feisty, successful, rags-to-riches, Black African-American woman[16]. Whilst being uncomfortable about the appropriation of Oprah Winfrey's 'Blackness' by a relatively privileged white woman, I was sensitive to the attraction this name had for my participant as an idealised/fantasy self. However, I was not convinced of its helpfulness from a research dissemination point of view. After a discussion about other 'feisty women', she chose a different name that was less likely to distract the reader/audience during dissemination.

With some participants, due to time constraints, I did not get the opportunity to ask them to choose a pseudonym; others who were asked preferred that I chose a name on their behalf. When selecting pseudonyms for participants, and particularly for those whose nationality/ethnicity differed from mine, I used a range of sources to make sure, as far as possible, that I had chosen names that were appropriate in terms of culture, ethnicity and meaning. In the end, all but one of the pseudonyms were chosen by me; as far as I have been able to tell, participants are comfortable with the selections I made.

The fourteen women to participate in my study ranged in age from mid-twenties to late-forties, and came from African Caribbean, Black African, South Asian, White British and White European backgrounds. All fourteen participants had managed to separate from their abusing partner, but nine women had dependent children who were still in contact with the perpetrator. Although the women in my study were no longer living with their abusers, ending an intimate relationship does not necessarily end the abuse (see, for example, Humphreys and Thiara 2003; Stanley et al. 2011; Walby and Allen 2004). Contact arrangements were often used by the fathers of these children to continue their abuse of

[16] Oprah Winfrey is an American media proprietor, talk show host, actress, producer, and philanthropist. She has been ranked the richest African-American of the 20th century, the greatest black philanthropist in American history, and is currently North America's first and only multi-billionaire black person (Brooks, 2016)..

the mothers. Thus, it was not always possible for participants to talk of the abusive relationship in the past tense.

In this section I have discussed my reasoning for the decisions I made before the process of data gathering began. I have also described some of the key characteristics of the women who participated. Having set out the design of my study, I now go on to discuss the issues to do with gathering my data.

Data gathering

Here, I set out what I did, and how I did it. Throughout the section, I discuss the ethical implications of gathering my data, and the steps I took to manage my power, as a researcher, while conducting my field work.

Ethical considerations

The University of Bedfordshire Research Ethics Committee (REC), as with most other RECs (Downes et al. 2014), deems domestic violence to be a 'sensitive' topic for research, and more likely than 'non-sensitive' subjects to discomfit participants. It also views 'people involved in situations of, or recovering from, domestic violence' (see appendix D) as a vulnerable population in that they may lack full competence to consent and are at heightened risk of being coerced. I take seriously my responsibility to cause them no harm, but consider the notion of participants' 'vulnerability' to be more nuanced than the REC and BPS guidance (2014) suggest.

Whilst DVA is clearly a sensitive topic, discussion of *any* subject, within a particular context, can prove distressing. A market researcher asking about people's use of hair products, for example, could find themselves interviewing someone whose hair had been lost as a result of chemotherapy. Similarly, the notion that someone is more vulnerable by virtue of belonging to a particular group, in this case women who have experienced DVA, positions them as having limited agency or capacity to protect their own interests. A counter-argument would be that many women with first-hand experience of DVA, who have managed to exit the abusive relationship, are more skilled than most at foiling attempts to coerce or manipulate them. Designating this particular population as 'vulnerable' is a paternalistic approach that risks minoritising and, thus, othering them (Downes et al. 2014).

The perspective I took when designing this study, and continue to take when disseminating my findings, is that I cannot truly know the participants' state of mind, or what might prove to be a trigger for distress; as with anyone else, the extent to which they are 'vulnerable' is likely to fluctuate over time. I therefore proceeded with the utmost care with all participants at all times. It would be irresponsible for me to claim that my questions about women's experiences of DVA will not have provoked any change in attitude or behaviour lasting beyond the duration of the study. Any interaction has the potential to change one's outlook, even if only to reinforce it. I can state, however, that I made every effort not to unsettle participants in any way. When anyone exhibited signs of stress or discomfort she was instantly offered choices on whether, and how, to proceed. In this way I was also acknowledging that she may have wished to continue *despite* her discomfort.

Although I had tried to anticipate all eventualities before I met with participants, some issues had to be revisited during the fieldwork. I found that, had I stuck rigidly to the procedure I proposed in my ethics application, I would have struggled to recruit and retain participants. For example, when telephoning them from my office at the University, my number appeared on their phones as 'withheld'; because of this, they did not answer my calls. I soon realised that I needed to phone them from an un-withheld number. Because I was not aware, at the time, of any way of doing this[17], I made some of the calls from my personal mobile phone. I also needed to telephone women at a time that was convenient for *them,* rather than during normal office hours; if that meant contacting them after they had put their children to bed, then that was when I made the call.

Interview locations

Selecting sites that are comfortable, and easily accessible, for participants helps to facilitate recruitment, demonstrate respect and build trust (Fassinger and Morrow 2013). Participants were offered a choice about where their interviews would take place. The five venues (Brenda House, Women's Aid in Luton; Stepping Stones; Luton All Women's Centre; Watford Women's Centre; and University of Bedfordshire) were chosen because each site is central, secure, and inconspicuous. I ensured that each participant had safe, convenient transport to and from her chosen venue, and that a telephone was always available. Finding appropriate rooms within these sites was not always easy. Because the agencies provide one-to-one counselling sessions, their private meeting rooms were in high demand. For this reason, I also offered participants the option to be interviewed in their own homes.

In order to protect my own safety, participants were only interviewed in their own home after consulting with the agency that had introduced me to them. If the staff considered the level of risk to be acceptable (i.e. the participant was no longer living with or in regular contact with the perpetrator), we decided that it was relatively safe to do so. On these occasions, I left the address at which I would be, in a sealed envelope, with a trusted person. My instructions were that, in the unlikely event that I fail to return or make contact with them by a certain time, they should call my mobile phone number twice, leaving five to ten minutes between calls. If they were to have cause for concern at this point, they were to report me as missing. On my return, I destroyed the envelope and its contents.

The reasons for participants' choice of venue varied; most chose their own home because it was convenient, and where they felt most relaxed. However, one participant specifically asked to meet away from her home; she had moved house since leaving her abusing partner, and did not want her new home to become 'tainted' by talking about her past abuse within its walls. Nine of the women who participated chose to be interviewed in their own home; two chose the University; a further two were interviewed in a private room on the premises of the agency that had put us in contact; and one chose her own office at her place of work.

[17] It is now possible to add a prefix to the number one is dialling in order to release one's own number on a call-by-call basis.

Preamble (for participants)

Henry Greenspan and Sidney Bolkosky (2006) asked groups of Holocaust survivors, who had been interviewed many times for a number of different projects, to evaluate their interview experiences. Aspects that were consistently noted as features of 'good' interviews involved a mutuality of engagement between the researcher and the researched, a rhythm to the dialogue, which is developed in concert rather than imposed, and a structure and pace that is purposeful without being rushed. In order to allow memories to be recalled in a coherent manner, the participant needs to feel relaxed; the interviewer's sensitivity, attentiveness and subject knowledge were seen as key to achieving this.

> *Consistently, a good interview was described as unhurried, somehow both orderly and organic, with an evolving life of its own (Greenspan and Bolkosky 2006, pp440-441).*

Erving Goffman (1959) refers to 'frontstage access' and 'backstage access' to describe the level of openness with which a speaker is prepared to tell his/her story. When recounting one's experiences to someone not known, one is less sure about how that information will be used, or with whom it will be shared. Inevitably, this will raise the level of guardedness adopted during the interview – which can, in turn, affect the quality of the data collected. So, for example, because of the stigma attached to having been a 'victim' (Copel and Al-Mamari 2016; McCleary-Sills et al. 2016; Murray et al. 2016), women who have experienced DVA may provide guarded responses, or only 'frontstage access', until/unless a level of trust has been established with the researcher.

Participants' psychological/emotional state will, to a large degree, determine the quality of the data collected; I recognised that, if they were relaxed, the interview was more likely to collect rich and meaningful data. In an unhurried preamble, and tailoring my language to make it accessible to each individual, I explained, verbally, to potential participants that I had little advance knowledge of what direction the interviews would take, or what I would learn from their story. Because of this I considered it important to state at the outset my theoretical perspective on DVA, and provide time for participants to get to know something about me before sharing their experiences.

I explained to each participant that I would not be seeking information from any other source and, unless they disclosed something that raised significant safeguarding concerns, I would not share what they told me with anyone other than my supervisory team. I informed them that their stories would be anonymised, and that neither they nor anyone else they were to talk about would be identifiable from my thesis, conference presentations or publications. I explained that, with their permission, I would record our conversation, and specified the measures that I would take to keep their data secure. These measures are set out in detail in the section below on 'data security and storage'.

I assured women that their participation was entirely voluntary and that, were they to consent, they would be free to withdraw from the study at any point up until I submitted my thesis. I explained that I would be presenting my findings to other academics, practitioners and service users before then, but would respect their change of mind from the point at which I was informed of it. Although the prospect of a late stage withdrawal of consent caused me some consternation, I felt it important that women retained this power. I cannot know, beyond the time of our meeting(s), what factors may shape their commitment to the project. If their feelings and/or circumstances were to alter such that they later regretted

their participation, I would not be equipped to judge the merit of that change of mind. In the event, no one who agreed to participate later withdrew their consent.

Once women had verbally agreed to participate, they were given two copies of a consent form (see appendix E). This included a brief statement about the purpose of the study, the terms on which they would be consenting, and contact details for my Director of Studies should they have any queries or complaints arising from their participation. They were asked to sign one copy of the consent form and return it to me; the other was for them to keep. Each interview was preceded by a verbal explanation of the project, and an assurance that I greatly valued the participant's contribution and viewed them as the expert on their own experiences. I imposed no time limits on our meeting, and stated that the duration of the interview would be determined by the participant's own availability and how much information they wished to share with me. Again, this positioned them as in control of the encounter, demonstrated respect and gratitude for their participation, and minimised any pressure to repackage (i.e. condense or draw out) their stories. Some participants established their own time limit; others were prepared to frame our meeting around its content rather than work to any particular finish time. In cases where no end time was negotiated at the outset, we agreed that we would proceed with the interview but reappraise periodically; if we chose to stop before the participant had completed her story, we would arrange another meeting.

I made it clear that, whilst I had a number of points that I wished to ask participants about, I did not intend to 'fire questions at them' and was hoping that the interview would take the form of a conversation - during which these points would spontaneously be addressed. I suggested that, toward the end of the interview, I would ask about any issues that remained unexamined. All of the women I spoke with were comfortable with what I had proposed and seemed reassured by my efforts to, as far as possible, place them in control of the process.

Interviews

Fieldwork was carried out over an eighteen-month period, with interviews taking place between June 2011 and October 2012. Permission was sought from, and granted by, participants to record the interviews using a digital voice recorder. I gave interviewees the opportunity to begin their story where they wanted. For example, women recruited via specialist support agencies found the particular agency/staff/programme to be a natural starting point. However, if they looked to me for direction, I asked how they first met the man who would later abuse them. I had an interview schedule (see appendix C), which included the topics that I wished to address. However, sitting with pen in hand and clipboard on lap (and periodically ticking something off) is not conducive to relaxed conversation – and is a constant visual reminder of the power dynamics at play. The schedule was not prominently placed, and only toward the end of our meeting did I check it to ensure that its main themes had been addressed. Not every interview covered all of the issues on the schedule. The interviews were non-directive; just because an issue was not raised by a particular participant cannot be taken to mean that it was not relevant to them. The only assessment that can be made with confidence is that, for them at that particular time, if it was relevant at all, it was less salient than the topics they chose to discuss.

For some researchers, especially those adopting a narrative approach, life history grids form part of the original study design [see, for example, Delamont (2012); Elliott (2005); Haglund

(2004)]. I had not intended to use them but, for one participant, it became a helpful tool. I spent several hours, over several weeks, with Olivia. She had been sexually abused as a child and, as an adult, had experienced a series of abusive relationships. People do not necessarily recount in chronological order and, quite early on, I was becoming confused about the detail of her story. I designed a life history grid, and populated it with the information I had been given so far (e.g. when she had left home, when her children had been born, etc.). I shared this with her at our next meeting and, from that point on, both of us used it to clarify/organise the various elements of her story.

A number of writers [see, for example, Brinkmann and Kvale (2008); Hollway and Jefferson (2000); Jervis (2011)] have urged researchers to consider what steps they should take if a participant becomes 'obviously moved' during an interview. Brinkmann and Kvale (2008) ask whether (s)he should proceed in a therapeutic vein (which risks exploiting the participant's vulnerability) or not (and risk appearing cold and aloof). In my interviews, there were several occasions in which participants' recounting of painful experiences led them to become visibly upset. On each occasion, I immediately acknowledged their discomfort/distress, and offered them choices; they could withdraw from the project at that point, we could stop the interview and reschedule, we could take a short break before continuing, or they could continue their story *despite* their distress. Participants appeared to value my acknowledgement that what they described was, indeed, upsetting, and the reminder that they were in control of the interview process; some chose to take a short break, and others chose to continue.

Whilst not wishing to provide too polished a picture of these processes, aside from the issues already discussed, the interviews did not generate any significant dilemmas. My previous experience of research interviewing had undoubtedly prepared me for managing many of the unanticipated issues that are a feature of such enquiry, and the interviews proceeded in fairly predictable ways. For example, visiting women's homes brought me into contact with cats, and dogs of varying breeds and sizes. Fortunately, I am comfortable with both, and the interruptions they caused served, if anything, to enhance the relationships between myself and their owners. In order to minimise the likelihood of being interrupted, the interviews were arranged at times when younger children of participants were not present (most often, while they were at school). Where older children were present in the household, they appeared to respect their mothers' requests not to be disturbed while I was there. For example, during one interview, the teenage son of the participant arrived home from an evening out with his friends. His mother and I immediately halted our conversation, and I paused the recording device; he and I were introduced and, after a brief engagement in small talk, he withdrew to his bedroom until I was leaving. Being prepared to be flexible about where and when the interviews were conducted, and expressing no frustration when arrangements were cancelled with little or no notice, seemed to 'oil the wheels' of our encounters and, when we did meet, I found participants to be well-prepared, enthusiastic and accommodating.

At the end of each interview I summarised our conversation, and checked with them that I had accurately captured what we had discussed. I thanked them for their contribution, and reassured them of the value of what they had told me. In order to reinforce this point, I tried to give them examples of key elements of their story that might be helpful to other women. These included the ways in which they had resisted their abuser's attempts to control them, and their strategies for exiting the relationship. Debriefing is discussed in more detail in the

next section, but drawing each interview to a close in this way gave me an opportunity to end the encounter on a positive note and check that women were not left unduly distressed by their participation. If they had chosen to continue their story at another time, we negotiated a mutually convenient date, time and venue to meet. If they felt that they had told me as much as they wished to, we went through a more thorough debriefing that is set out in the following section.

Debriefing, and withdrawal from the research field

As mentioned in the earlier section on 'research design', participants' declared motives for sharing their stories with me were borne of a desire to contribute to the knowledge base on DVA, and to help other women. As the interviews progressed, however, many noted that they had also gained personal insight from telling their stories. Downes et al (2014) discuss the benefits of taking part in well-designed, ethical research into violence and abuse; they suggest that, for women who have endured abuse, the act of 'bearing witness' can be a positive experience. That said, whilst none of the women in my study claimed to have regretted their decision to engage, two had been unsettled by the resurfacing of emotions triggered by their participation.

Naomi had been surprised by the resurgence of long-buried feelings that her involvement had triggered. We had initially planned for two interviews, the first to provide a broad outline of her experiences and the second to discuss them in more detail. She had been composed and outwardly calm throughout the first interview, and her disclosure was made as I was preparing to leave. I was concerned about the extent to which she might have been re-traumatised (Valpied et al. 2014) by her participation. We discussed this, and I provided information about the agencies that she might wish to contact for support. We agreed that she would take some time to decide whether or not to continue her participation. She later contacted me to say that she was emotionally unharmed by, and had derived significant benefit from, taking part in the interview, but had chosen not to go ahead with another meeting.

Another participant, Olivia, had been sexually abused in childhood. Although she had been helped by a specialist DVA organisation to process her experience of abuse as an adult, she had never received any form of counselling to help her deal with her childhood abuse. She had spoken about this experience during the interview but, on debrief, she was calm and cheerful. However, the following morning she emailed me to say that, once she had returned home and begun to reflect on our conversation, she had become distressed. I considered that she might benefit from speaking to someone with specialist knowledge and expertise, and began to construct a reply containing details of local and national helplines. Before sending my reply, and in light of the drastic cuts that such services had been experiencing, I thought it wise to check that the helplines were, in fact, still operating. I dialled the telephone numbers for four different helplines: Olivia's local Rape Crisis; Rape Crisis England and Wales; her local Women's Aid; and the 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline[18]. Each call was made at a time when, according to the organisation's website, the helpline would be answered by a fully trained person. In all four cases, my call was answered by a machine; I heard a recorded message, inviting me to leave a contact number on which I could be reached. Had I simply sent Olivia the details of those

[18] The 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline is provided via a partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge.

organisations, without first checking that they were operating, I might have unwittingly increased her distress. It takes courage to make the first step toward seeking support; being disappointed at this stage can undermine women's confidence still further, and reinforce their feelings of low self-worth (Abrahams 2007; Warner 2009). In my response to Olivia I was able to explain that she might need to leave a message and wait for someone to return her call. Although not ideal, she was at least armed with a realistic view of what to expect.

All participants, in line with previous research (Clark et al. 2012; Downes et al. 2014; Edwards and Sylaska 2015; Langford 2000; Valpied et al. 2014), pointed to benefits of taking part that they had not anticipated. They mentioned feeling that, by being heard, their experiences had been validated. The space created by the interviews had given them the opportunity to reflect upon, and helped them to make sense of, their abuse. It had been uncomfortable, and occasionally painful, to revisit their experiences but, overall, they had found participation to be cathartic.

Once they had contributed as much as they felt able to, and where it had been possible to maintain contact with them, each participant was provided with a copy of their transcribed interviews, thanked for their participation, and briefed as to how I intended to use their accounts. Women had not been offered any financial inducement for participation but, as a token of my appreciation for their involvement, each was handed a 'thank you' card and a CD containing the audio files (in MP3 format) and transcripts (in Word) of their interviews. See Appendix J for examples. The card and envelope were addressed using the participant's real name but, in order to disguise its content, the CD jewel case used her pseudonym, and the CD label contained no text. The card and CD were handed to the participant personally. I explained that she was free to do what she wanted with these, but stressed that the files stored on the disc had not been anonymised. I lost contact with three participants before I was able to give them their card and CD. In these cases, I kept the items securely for two years, and then destroyed them.

Due to the fluid nature of the data gathering process, debriefing participants did not often take the form of a one-off event. Projects without clear boundaries or definitive endings can leave participants unsure about the nature of their relationships with researchers (Fassinger and Morrow 2013). However, given that women's reasons for participating in my study included increasing general understanding of DVA, and benefitting other abused women, I anticipated that some would wish to be kept apprised of the project's progress. Half of the participants indicated no desire to have contact beyond their own contribution to the study. The remaining seven, however, expressed a wish to be kept informed of any presentations and publications drawing on my findings[19].

I saw, and continue to see, my contact with participants not simply as a series of interviews but as an appropriately boundaried set of relationships (Michailova et al. 2014). From this perspective, there is not some predefined (and, thus, artificial) moment beyond which the researcher and the researched will have no further contact; exiting the field is a process of uncoupling, rather than merely a skill to be managed at a particular point in time. Michailova et al (2014) note that, when withdrawing from the field, participants and

[19] Of these, one was forced to return to a refuge when her husband broke into her home and assaulted her. Having discussed it with her case worker, who was still in contact with her and prepared to pass my message on, I asked that she get in touch with me only should she wish to; she did not make contact.

researchers make promises to remain in contact, although these are rarely kept. They liken this to leaving a job or moving home and reassuring others that one will 'stay in touch'.

> *Exiting in this sense becomes a distinctive stage only in retrospect as contact fades (Michailova et al. 2014, p143).*

Whilst I may have withdrawn from the field in which my data were collected, I have ongoing relationships with the organisations that provided me with access to participants. Therefore, although it diminishes over time, the possibility remains that our paths will cross. Thus, the notion that exiting is within my control would be an illusion (Michailova et al. 2014); it is shaped by a complex range of connections and relationships that themselves shift over time.

Once I had started analysing my data I began being invited to present to various groups, including service commissioners, practitioners, service users and academics. Some of the participants in my study were present on these occasions – either because they were already members of the group that I was addressing or because they came along especially to hear me speak.

When preparing to discuss my findings at academic conferences in 2013-15 (Neale 2013; Neale 2014; Neale 2015a; Neale 2015b; Neale 2015c), for example, I first presented my work to a local women's support group. On each occasion, I took along a laptop and projector so that I could speak to a PowerPoint presentation, and provided hard copy handouts of my slides for those in attendance. In the discussions that followed, I asked women to provide feedback on my interpretations and conclusions, and to rate the presentation for clarity and coherence. I also asked participants (in private) to comment on the trustworthiness of what I had presented. I was committed to remaining available to participants for as long as possible and, for those who had asked to be kept abreast of my progress, updating them on presentations of my findings. The 'dry runs' of my conference presentations thus served two functions: they allowed me to check my analysis with participants and avoid misrepresentation of what they had told me; and provided me with another way of 'giving something back' to the individuals and organisations that had contributed so generously to my study. It reinforced the notion of collaboration with, and respect for the views of, participants. Furthermore, they served as a series of signals to the conclusion of the researcher/researched relationship. Involving participants and groups in this way not only contributed to the trustworthiness of the study, in that they confirmed my analysis, but also empowered them by enabling them to take ownership of the results (Fassinger and Morrow 2013).

Data security and storage

My data consist of field notes and forty-three hours of recorded interview with fourteen women, collected between June 2011 and October 2012. This study was conducted in accordance with the University of Bedfordshire's (2015) IT Data Security Policy and (2010) Data Protection Policy, both of which are compliant with the (1998) Data Protection Act.

Interviews were digitally recorded. I was conscious that, at the stage between leaving the interview location and returning to my desk, I was carrying a digital file from which my participant could be easily identified. I made sure that the recording device did not leave my possession until I had uploaded the file on to my password-protected personal computer,

and then immediately deleted it from the device. All hard copy materials (handwritten field notes, signed consent forms, etc.) were scanned to produce electronic files, and uploaded to the password-protected computer. Paper documents have been stored in a locked filing cabinet, to which only I have access.

In writing up my thesis, I needed to negotiate the conflict between meeting the scientific demand for authenticity and trustworthiness, and the ethical demand for participant anonymity. Providing full interview transcripts in the appendices would have allowed these to be checked against my analysis but, because of the level of detail they contain, it would have been possible to identify participants from the 'raw data'. The usual methods of anonymising data are to replace real names (including place names, etc.) with pseudonyms and redact sections of the text that contain identifying information. Replacing actual names with pseudonyms would not have been sufficient to conceal participants' identities, and the extent to which I would have needed to redact the transcripts to obscure or remove sensitive information would have rendered them difficult to read for meaning or verification purposes. I was also concerned that I might overlook, or not appreciate the significance of, something that could later identify a participant. I discussed the issue with my Director of Studies and the University's Research Graduate School and argued that, for this study, a higher level of data security was required. It was agreed that, in the thesis to be examined, only one anonymised interview transcript would be included in the appendices. At viva voce[20], it was agreed with my examiners that the transcript would be removed from the final document.

I have a responsibility to the participants, and the wider research community, to disseminate this work. In preparing publications and presentations from my thesis, it will be necessary to return to my data corpus. For this reason, and in line with the University of Bedfordshire's Data Protection Policy (2010), I will keep electronic data, but all hard copy will be destroyed on completion of the PhD process.

Having set out my justification for my methodological approach, and the steps I took in gathering and securing my data, I now move on to what I did with them.

Data analysis

As previously noted, once knowledge is produced and shared, the audience (in this context, the researcher/interviewer) does something with what they learn. They, too, draw on certain discourses to make sense of that knowledge and, in so doing, position the speakers in particular ways. In his study of testimony from survivors of Jasenovac concentration camp, Jovan Byford (2014) found that there are cultural differences in how people's accounts are constructed and heard. Of the corpus of testimonies, recorded in Serbia between 1989 and 1997 for a US-based oral history collection, the American-led interviews had an emotion-centred approach that focussed on the trauma suffered by individuals. This contrasted with the atrocity-centred Serbian approach, in which the survivors were seen as material witnesses to the atrocities. Similarly, Henry Greenspan (1998) notes the different forms of rhetoric used about the account-giving of Holocaust survivors. In a 'ceremonial' discourse, the survivor is celebrated; in a 'psychiatric' discourse, the speaker is

[20] The academic oral examination of my thesis.

psychologised, and perceived as vulnerable. Imposing a 'therapeutic identity' (McLaughlin 2012) constructs a self that is damaged and fragile:

> *It is the recognition of past or present trauma that is demanded; recognition not in respect of what the individual or group has done but on what has been done to them, not for what they have achieved but for what they have suffered (McLaughlin 2012, p96).*

I would argue that all of these positionings are repressive in the sense that they deny key aspects of the speakers' identities. My role as researcher involves facilitating participants' contribution to the knowledge base on DVA. Hearing, and reporting on, participants' experiences is a socially and culturally embedded practice. My aim is that, as far as possible, this study reflects all aspects of participants' identities, and that they are constructed and heard as 'persuasive experts' on women's experiences of DVA.

Semi-structured narrative style interviews were used to collect my data, and these were then transcribed and analysed, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) method, for the themes they contained. In choosing this method, I considered and rejected some other tools for analysis. In line with my aims, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and grounded theory, for example, allow the exploration of meanings for the individual. However, they do not go beyond this. They assume the individual's account to be complete, and bounded; the individual's meanings are given primacy.

Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis (TA) is inductive in that, rather than a theory-driven approach to analysis (i.e. starting with a hypothesis that is tested and the results of which are then recorded), its aim is to generate an analysis *from* the data. TA allows for interpretation; an analysis that goes beyond the individual's account and explores ways in which it might be influenced by factors outside of the narrative provided. As Nicola Gavey notes:

> *If we see our role as feminist researchers as giving women a voice then it may not be legitimate to describe experiences as rape that women themselves don't describe in that way. But feminist research seeks to go beyond giving a voice; to offer analyses and critiques which help make sense of women's experiences as they are shaped and constrained by power relations in social contexts (Gavey 2005, p179).*

TA has been criticised for being atheoretical (Braun 2014; Braun and Clarke 2006; Braun and Clarke 2013), but I would argue that this is a misinterpretation of their position. They assert the need for an epistemological framework for *any* research activity, and suggest that an advantage of TA is its flexibility; it can be used within a range of approaches because it is not tied to any particular theoretical model (Braun and Clarke 2006).

As discussed in Chapter 1, the focus in much of the DVA literature is limited, and tends to point to the risk factors that make certain women vulnerable to abuse. A feminist poststructuralist approach enabled me to shorten the focal length of the spotlight beam and illuminate the broader stage on which abusive relationships are played out; TA allowed me to investigate and interpret the wider range of factors identified. In combination, they allowed me to look at women's accounts entering, enduring and leaving abusive relationships, and explore the ways in which their experiences and understandings might be shaped by the behaviour of the perpetrator, i.e. his manipulation of her and her environment, and the larger context within which this occurs. Drawing on Nicola Gavey's

(2005) concept of 'cultural scaffolding' (see Chapter 1), I am, for example, reimaging Erving Goffman's (1968) work on 'mortification' (see Chapter 1) – in this case, the process by which participants' identities are dismantled in order to render them controllable. TA helped me to render available for scrutiny perpetrators' manipulation of the space between their partners' initial perceptions of their relationships as 'normal' and their later conceptualisations of them as 'abusive'. It also allowed examination of the difficulty of naming normalised courtship and relationship behaviours as abusive, the discourses that can mask abusive behaviours, and the unavailability of alternative discourses.

In carrying out this work, within a feminist poststructuralist framework, I followed the steps that Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest a good TA should have. These stages, and how I applied them, are discussed in the next section. In qualitative research, there is rarely a distinct separation between collecting one's data and analysing them (Braun and Clarke 2013). Because, for me, transcribing the interviews formed part of the process of analysing my data, I begin with a discussion of this phase. I then set out the method I chose to organise, and make sense of, the corpus of data gathered from my interviews with participants.

Transcription

As was noted in the section on 'research design', the process of interviewing has the potential to circumscribe the storyteller's experiences of the topic under scrutiny. Ultimately, the researcher decides which questions to ask, and not ask, and thus shapes the narrative that is produced. The act of recording and transcribing further delimits the account that is produced in that, depending on the researcher's theoretical perspective, methodological approach and primary research interest, certain features of the narrative are occluded. Audio recording is, in itself, selective; facial expressions and body language, for example, are not captured. When transcribing, annotations can be used to denote pauses, rising/falling intonation, louder/quieter speech and other features of the data; however, many of the more nuanced elements of communication (e.g. accent and cadence) are lost.

Some investigators choose to delegate what they see as a purely technical task. However, this introduces yet another element (i.e. the transcriber) to the process that risks the loss of what could be meaningful data. In transcribing, one is also interpreting – making decisions about what is, and what is not, most salient (Riessman 2008). Employing a transcriber also involves sharing sensitive information with a third party and, thus, raises questions about the ethics of doing so without participants' consent and whether or not that person can be trusted to maintain confidentiality.

In order to minimise the extent to which these aspects of the research encounter might be eroded, I transcribed the interviews myself. Whilst recognising that a truly authentic reconstruction is unattainable, I reproduced the dialogue verbatim, and used Jefferson's (2004) system of notation symbols for capturing the non-lexical elements of each interview. (See appendix F for a glossary of the symbols used.) I included my expressions of encouragement and understanding, such as 'mm', 'yeah', etc. Stripping out these features (i.e. excluding the interviewer) can save time during the transcribing process, but provides a sense of the story being generated solely by the speaker. Leaving the transcript intact in this way allowed me to provide participants with the most authentic record possible of their interviews.

As I transcribed the interviews, I continued to 'process' the story; thus, the analysis began at this stage. As thoughts occurred to me, and in order not to lose or forget them, they were added to the Word document as footnotes or endnotes and, later, coded along with the transcribed speech. The process of transcribing provides an excellent way of beginning to familiarise oneself with the data (Riessman 1993), and it is to this stage that I now turn.

Familiarisation

There are two broad approaches to the analysis of qualitative data. In a structured analysis, the emphasis is on *how* the story is told. Whilst not wanting to lose the context and more nuanced aspects of the interview, my primary interest was in *what* was spoken rather than how it was said. The task during this phase of the analysis was to fully immerse myself in the data, familiarise myself with its content, and record my 'noticings' (Braun and Clarke 2013) – those elements of the data that, whilst being interesting, are not necessary for theoretical coherence (I return to this issue later). At this stage, as during the transcribing, I made notes on my thoughts about the data. These were added to the transcripts as footnotes or endnotes, which were then coded as described in the next section.

Coding

My data consisted of forty-three hours of interviews with fourteen women. The total word count for my data corpus was 365,000; to code this amount of data manually would have been prohibitively time-consuming. Therefore, my data were analysed using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). Atlas.ti was chosen because it does not determine the way in which one analyses the data, or impose any structure on these processes. The researcher remains in complete control of, and immersed in, the data; the software simply automates the laborious and time-consuming process of coding (Friese 2014). Sections of text are highlighted by the researcher, and coded, in exactly the same way they would be if done manually, and decisions about how to name the codes and what to do with the coded data are made solely by the researcher.

Rather than selectively code for particular, predetermined phenomena, I examined the corpus for anything and everything that I considered to be of interest. I deployed a complete coding (Braun and Clarke 2013) strategy, in which the researcher codes all of the data relevant to the research question, producing what Braun and Clarke refer to as a 'data set', and only later begins to refine or put to one side that which has been coded.

Not all of my codes went on to be incorporated into themes, the properties of which are discussed in the next section, and not all codes appeared frequently in the data. References to 'disability', for example, featured in just one of the narratives, and was mentioned ten times. Whilst it did not seem to sit within any larger cluster of codes, it was nonetheless important in understanding how that particular participant conceptualised her experiences and made decisions. Each data item coded to 'disability' was assigned to additional codes that did become incorporated into themes. For example, the following data item was coded to 'disability', 'emotional abuse' and 'exhaustion'.

> *…I mean the rows with (husband) could go on twenty-four hours, 'cos I'd be in that grip, you know, I'd have hhh I'd be in that total grip where you know it's all then about him, taking all the attention to him, and I'd be a quivering wreck because, you know,*

first 'cos of the shock of course, and the fright, the fear, trying to protect the children, not being strong enough because I'm disabled, yeah, and he would keep that going, he wouldn't just go and cool off, because if he ever went and cooled off, it was momentary, but I guess he would keep on doing it until I just sort of collapsed really (Marcia, 2, 178-184).

Because, when producing reports in Atlas.ti, data items are shown with every code that was applied to each item, I did not lose sight of those items coded to 'disability'. Because the above quote from Marcia was also coded to 'emotional abuse' and 'exhaustion', it was incorporated in the theme 'Living with Abuse'.

Once I had coded all of the data items relevant to my research question, I refined the coding. For example, data items coded to 'first meeting with perpetrator' were later subdivided into 'first meeting with perpetrator' and 'first impressions of perpetrator'. Items were reassigned to the new code of 'first impressions' if they indicated participants' evaluations of the man rather than the context of their first encounter.

Having coded those aspects of the corpus that were relevant to my research question, and having refined my code names where necessary (see Appendix G for the refined list of codes), I then began searching systematically for patterns in my data. This process is described in the next section.

Searching for, reviewing and defining themes

'Themes' represent patterned meanings (Braun and Clarke 2006) in the data; elements that capture something important about the data set in relation to the research question. They generally consist of a cluster of codes, though this need not be the case (a theme could be represented by only one code). Having collated the data items attached to each of my codes (see code list in Appendix G), I began to look for emergent themes.

Some researchers talk in terms of themes 'emerging from the data' [see, for example, Buller et al (2016) and Hatcher et al (2016)]. This, however, suggests the researcher's role to be a passive one, in which they simply note pre-existing properties of the data. I did not 'discover' patterns in my data; I made active choices (Braun and Clarke 2013) about how I viewed them, and what I did with them. At a different point in time I may well have made other choices, as might another researcher examining the same data.

I made sure that the nature of the themes upon which I settled, and the structure of my analysis and results, allowed for those elements of participants' narratives that were of relevance to my research question to be captured. Toward the end of this process, the themes I identified for analysis were: Courtship (which, because of its importance in terms of my research question, and relationship to other codes, such as 'identity before relationship' and 'early warning signs', I had promoted from a code to a theme), Cultural Scaffolding, Living with Abuse, and Post-Separation Abuse. A number of further codes, while interesting, did not obviously address my research question or fit within any of my identified themes. These included, for example, 'impact of research participation' and 'Maslow's hierarchy of needs'. In the earlier stage of analysis, they were collated into a 'Miscellaneous' category; this meant that, as my analysis progressed, I did not risk losing sight of them and, should I decide to make changes to my themes, could re-categorise them as necessary. In the event, some of my miscellaneous codes (for example, 'Maslow's hierarchy of needs' and

'meaning of 'home'') did not contribute materially to the analysis presented in the following chapters. Data from another code, 'impact of research participation', were reported in my research design. Some 'Miscellaneous' codes, although not directly addressing my research question, have been used to inform my theory-building; codes for perpetrators' relationships, for example, were subsequently used to shape my analysis (discussed below) of perpetrators' behaviours. A table showing my themes, and the codes associated with each theme, can be found in Appendix H.

This process of identifying, reviewing and defining themes involved going back and forth repeatedly over my data, sometimes going down slightly different paths (a few of which led to cul-de-sacs). Only in retrospect was I aware of having moved forward; at the time, this process of refining was far more recursive than linear. However, reviewing and revising candidate themes, and checking their fit with both the coded data and the overall data set, were important steps toward a high-quality analysis (Braun and Clarke 2013). A significant level of interpretation necessarily informed all phases of my TA, but the next phase, in which I communicate my results, represents my final analysis of the data; it is to a discussion of this phase that I now turn.

Writing

The final stage of a thematic analysis involves the 'deep analytic interpretive work to make sense of, and interpret the patterns identified in the data' (Braun and Clarke 2013, p248). In my initial readings of women's narratives, I had attended to *participants'* thoughts and actions but, as I immersed myself more fully in the data, I began shortening the focal length of the beam in an attempt to illuminate more of the *contexts* within which their accounts were produced. I noticed the ways in which perpetrators' behaviours shaped the events they described, and that women's attempts to make sense of those behaviours were often hampered by their difficulty in naming them as abusive. Having identified my emergent themes, as described above, I considered that one of them, 'Cultural Scaffolding', cut across all of the other three themes: Courtship; Living with Abuse; and Post-Separation Abuse. I decided that, rather than a theme in its own right, it should be a sub-theme of each of the others.

Closer examination of perpetrators' behaviours led me to identify an additional pattern in my data. Rather than abuse as a series of unplanned or, occasionally, accidental acts, I found many descriptions of what appeared (to me) to have been premeditation. In some participants' accounts of how they met their partners, for example, 'chance encounters' began to look more like 'victim selection'. At this point, I discovered Delroy Paulhus' (2014; 2002) work on Dark Triad. This model of personality consists of three conceptually distinct but overlapping constructs: Narcissism (i.e. grandiosity, egocentrism and a sense of personal entitlement); Machiavellianism (strategic manipulation and alliance building); and psychopathy (callousness, or lack of empathy). Dark Triad has been used to explore a range of issues in applied psychology including criminal and antisocial behaviour (Flexon et al. 2016; Jones 2014; van Geel et al. 2017; Westhead and Egan 2015), individual differences in ambition (Blais and Pruysers 2017), creativity (Jonason et al. 2017), harmful online behaviours (Bogolyubova et al. 2018), jealousy (Barelds et al. 2017; Chin et al. 2017) and attachment in romantic relationships (Brewer et al. 2018).

As noted in Chapter 1, I am critical of the notion of an essential self in which individuals are made up of a combination of relatively stable personality characteristics. Applying personality theory would, therefore, be at odds with my feminist poststructuralist position. My interest was in the control mechanisms used by perpetrators but, rather than locating the explanation for them in individual pathology, I am looking to heteropatriarchy – the socio-political system in which heterosexual men have more power in relation to women and those of other sexual orientations. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 3, but using Dark Triad as an heuristic device seemed a useful way of *describing/interpreting*, rather than explaining, the nature of those control mechanisms. Having applied this lens to my data corpus, I looked for items that did not fit with a Dark Triad description; I found nothing that was inconsistent with the schema.

My final analysis, taking account of the points noted above, is represented in the thematic map below (see Figure 4). Having refined my earlier thinking, I settled on three main themes: Courtship; Living with abuse; and Post-separation abuse. 'Courtship' captures participants' first encounters with, and impressions of, the perpetrator, their early aspirations for the relationship, and early experiences of being 'a couple'. 'Living with abuse' brings together participants' experiences of abuse, and their early attempts to understand those experiences. The third main theme captures women's identification of, and resistance to, the abuse. Two sub-themes, that span all three main themes, are 'Cultural Scaffolding' and 'Dark Triad'. Cultural scaffolding consists of the aspects of participants' relationships that fell between 'healthy' and 'DVA', and their difficulties in naming them as abusive. Dark Triad captures the behaviours of perpetrators, and the purpose they served as mechanisms for controlling their partners.

Earlier in this chapter, I set out my methodological approach, and study design. I described the method I used to gather my data, and the ethical implications of so doing. In this section, I detailed my approach to analysing the data. The choices I made about how to analyse my data are pragmatic (McNamee 1988). By this I mean that they are based on my own construction of participants' experiences; another observer of my data, or I at a different point in time, could come to a different way of analysing them. That said, I consider my analysis, which is set out in the next three chapters, has theoretical merit and can contribute something meaningful to the existing knowledge base on women's experiences of DVA.

Some qualitative research, in line with mainstream psychology report writing style, consists of a separate discussion section. In others [see, for example, (Clarke et al. 2015; Hayfield et al. 2014; Rance et al. 2017; Rance et al. 2014; Terry and Braun 2016)], the results and discussion sections are combined. My analysis and results chapters adopt the latter style, with references to relevant literature used throughout each chapter to locate my analysis in relation to existing knowledge. This style avoided the need for what can be tedious repetition between the results and discussion sections, and allowed me to develop my analysis in situ.

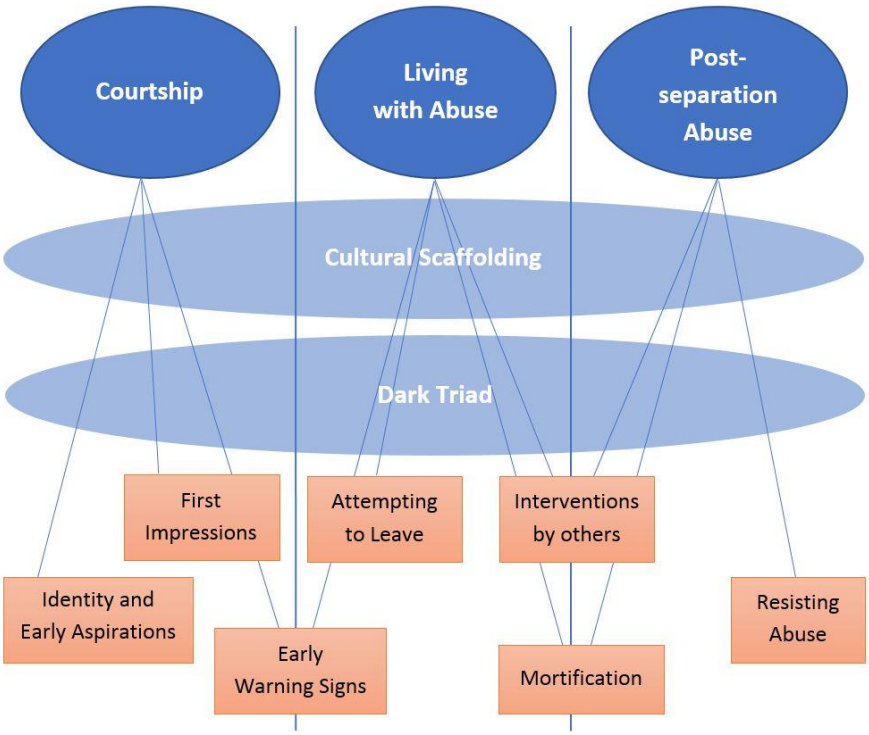

Figure 4: Final Thematic Map

Conclusion

Qualitative research acknowledges the contingent nature of knowledge, and refutes the idea that it is possible to present 'the true story' about one's data. I began the chapter by discussing my rejection of structuralism, and its notions of objectivity and universal truths about the world. My active personal engagement, with the women who participated in my study, and with the topic, inevitably influenced the research process and the 'knowledge' produced. My aim was to tell an authentic story, i.e. one that is faithful to the data.

The method used to gather my data was semi-structured, narrative-style interviews. This provided me with a broad tapestry in terms of women's accounts of their experiences of DVA. My attention to issues of power within the research process played a significant part in generating such a data-rich corpus for analysis. It allowed women to 'own' the interview space in a way that is not so easily achieved in more structured approaches, and to talk about the issues that were most meaningful for them.

Whilst the resulting data are rich, my approach also meant that, in terms of addressing my research question, a not insubstantial proportion of women's talk was superfluous. These extracts took time to transcribe, and to read for meaning. Although this created work that has not directly benefitted my thesis, for two reasons I consider it to have been a price worth paying. Firstly, in line with my ethical responsibility to participants (BPS 2014), women were encouraged to feel that, rather than having been passively mined for information, they had actively contributed to the research, and their participation was valued. Secondly, the corpus generated from the interviews contains more themes than I was able to use in this thesis. For example, whilst some of the references to 'identity' have been incorporated in my analysis, many more that were unrelated to my research question have not. 'Identity' is a strong thread running through my data. Although I would first need

to give careful consideration to the ethical implications of so doing, these data provide scope for a separate analysis at a later date.

In the next three chapters, I set out my analysis of the data gathered, and discuss this in relation to my research question and what is currently known about women's experiences of DVA. These chapters are arranged chronologically, and follow women's journeys into, through and out of their abusive relationships. In Chapter 3, 'Ensnarement', I discuss participants' first encounters with the perpetrator, and their courtship experiences. In Chapter 4, 'Identity theft', I talk about women's experiences of living with abuse, and the strategies used by perpetrators to isolate and control them. Women's resistance to the abuse, and their attempts to exit the relationship, are set out in Chapter 5, 'Remote control'.

Chapter 3 Ensnarement: Prior Experiences, First Encounters with the Perpetrator, and Courtship

In this chapter, I present the analysis of the first of my identified themes, 'Prior experiences, first encounters and courtship'; that is, for each participant, the period leading up to her abuse. I begin by providing a high-resolution, 'street level' view of my data, and draw mainly on the following coding categories: 'Participants' perceptions of, and explanations for abuse' (in this chapter, primarily those that relate to their lives prior to meeting the perpetrator); 'Early aspirations'; 'First meeting with perpetrator'; 'First impressions of perpetrator'; 'Interventions by others'; and 'Courtship'. I discuss participants' exposure to the forms of adversity that are considered to make individuals vulnerable to DVA, and the early stages of their relationships with the men who would go on to abuse them. I explore the context in which each woman met their partner, and the courtship behaviour of the men. In the second part of the chapter, drawing on current knowledge and understandings about DVA, these issues are used as the basis for discussing the themes that I identified.

Thematic analysis

Participants' perceptions of their prior experiences

In this section, the extent to which participants considered themselves to have been, at the point they met their abuser, 'vulnerable to abuse' is discussed. In line with my narrative interview style, participants were encouraged to talk about their lives before and up to the point at which they met their abuser. They were not asked directly about the extent to which they had been exposed to the aforementioned risk factors but, in telling their stories, they spontaneously addressed the level to which they were affected by each one.

Women had come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Freya, Kamala, Leonie, Marcia, Nombeko and Ruth described being born into relatively affluent families, with at least one parent employed in a professional-managerial role. Although the remaining eight participants described childhoods that were not quite so privileged, none saw herself as living in poverty at the point she met her abuser. None of the fourteen considered herself to be learning disabled and, at the start of their abusive relationships, none had any physical impairment or alcohol/drug problems. In terms of mental ill health, only Kirsten had shown any signs of distress before entering the relationship.

Mental ill health

Kirsten's childhood had been somewhat unsettled; her father had been absent during much of the time that she was growing up, and her mother had had a series of what Kirsten considered to be unsuitable partners. Her mother had had difficulty coping with her responsibilities as a single mother and, as a result, Kirsten had been 'in and out of foster care homes' (13, 12)[21]. In her teens, she was considered by her parents to be 'difficult'; she became angry in response to perceived transgressions of others, ran away from home on more than one occasion, and began self-harming. She explained:

[21] References to participants' speech follows the following format: the first number in brackets denotes the interview number; the second denotes the speech turn within that interview.

If I was placed at home my mum and dad they had to know where I was that was their agreement with social services… so the whole point of me going to work with my dad was to keep me out of trouble over the summer so my mum and dad knew where I was (Kirsten, 13, 12-13).

Kirsten described this level of monitoring as being under 'house arrest' (13, 14), and had been frustrated by her parents' failure to look more closely at the reasons for her troubling behaviour. As a young woman, she had tried, unsuccessfully, to address this with her mother:

My mum will go, "I don't know why you're so angry about your childhood, you know, your sister's not this bad", no because my sister got away from it, my sister didn't have all these uncles to contend with and God knows what else, we had very very different childhoods, where my mum would say, "I don't know what you're talking about, you both had exactly the same" (Kirsten, 13, 123).

Before she met the man who would become her husband, she had been diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), which is characterised by instability in mood, emotional state and relationships (NIMH 2016). However, Kirsten's view was that her diagnosis of BPD had merely served as a bit of a 'smokescreen', and saw her dysfunctional home life as the root cause of her challenging behaviour.

Emotional neglect

Most participants did not consider their early experiences to be overtly abusive or neglectful. Eve, Kamala, Leonie and Ruth recalled comfortable home lives and close relationships with their siblings and both parents. Kamala, for example, described growing up in a supportive family and her parents' relationship as loving and respectful:

…no arguments whatsoever I never, only once I've heard my dad ever raise his voice, …that kind of devastated my mum, and that was just raising your voice (Kamala, 14, 32-33).

…you know all our friends were welcome in the house, ...it was just <u>nice</u>[22] it was just <u>normal</u> (Kamala, 14, 14).

The youngest of three girls, Ruth gave a similar account of her own childhood. She described her parents as 'always very close and always very supportive' (25, 115), and the family home thus:

…it was happy, we had a really loving family, you know and I was very, I admired both of my sisters hugely, and I was always trying to sort of be in their favour, which must have been incredibly annoying ((laughs))[23] probably a yappy puppy I think (Ruth, 25, 91-93).

A further six participants referred to tensions in their familial relationships, but noted that these were mitigated by other factors. For example, although Colette and Freya had had a strained relationship with one parent, they had felt valued by, and close to, their other parent and their siblings. Marcia and Nombeko had been brought up with and, in

[22] Words that were strongly emphasised by participants are underlined.
[23] Double parentheses enclose transcriber comments.

Nombeko's case, by, their grandmothers; each woman described somewhat distant parent-child relationships, but extremely close bonds with their grandmother. For example, Nombeko said:

> *I had a happy childhood, I had a really wonderful grandmother, …oh yeah and I had all the attention in the world, I had all the encouragement in the world, I felt loved, absolutely, …I can't see a moment in my life where I was thinking I wasn't loved (Nombeko, 28, 191)*

Carmen described early and traumatic disruption in her relationship with her parents. Her mother had died unexpectedly, after a routine hospital operation, when she was very young. Her father had continued to raise her and her older siblings:

> *My dad did everything for us, he didn't work he gave up work and he looked after us, and every day when we would leave school he would be home, when we came back he would be home, he taught us to cook, to clean, he used to braid our hair every morning, he never ever had another woman brought another woman into the house (Carmen, 5, 199).*

He, too, died suddenly some ten years later. For Carmen, at eleven years old, his death had come as a shock:

> *…no leads up to it… nothing just one day the house is in darkness with all these people and Dad's gone (Carmen, 5, 227)*

On her father's death, her older sister, Jenny, assumed parental responsibility for her two younger siblings:

> *…it was tough, …I was eleven and (Jenny)[24] was sixteen, and somehow she convinced social services that she could look after us so they left us, she had a part-time job in our local (supermarket) and she (attended) college, and she looked after us and I just I owe her <u>everything</u>, and that's why we're so close (Carmen, 5, 227).*

Thus, despite the loss of two committed parents, Carmen had grown up feeling loved, and cared for.

The remaining four participants described having felt emotionally neglected by both parents, and all four mentioned that their parents had separated when they were young. (Olivia had also been physically and sexually abused, and her experience is discussed in the next section.) On separation, Kirsten, Naomi and Kim had remained with their mothers, and had had limited contact with their fathers while they were growing up. This had restricted their opportunities for meaningful father-daughter relationships. For example, Kim said:

> *My relationship with my dad is okay, …when we were growing up, it wasn't that good, …there was a few years that we didn't like talk to my dad (Kim, 11, 247-250).*

These three participants also suggested that their mothers' unhappiness about the separation had led each of them to resent her children. As Naomi explained:

> *I think deep down she kind of felt robbed, …after my dad left she was what thirty, had four children, I suppose in her mind no hope of settling down again 'cos who'd want someone with four kids? (Naomi, 16, 93-94)*

[24] Pseudonyms are used throughout, for participants and all the individuals to whom they referred.

Her mother's resentment continued when Naomi had left school and, at seventeen, was working:

> *I just worked really hard, earned money, and then that was a source of resentment for my mum because she couldn't work and was on benefits and here I was earning decent money, but rather than be pleased for me she just didn't like it (Naomi, 16, 115-117).*

Naomi was the eldest of four children, and her parents divorced when she was twelve years old. Her mother, prevented from working by the prohibitive costs of childcare, and receiving no financial support from their father, was forced to rely on welfare benefits and the charity of friends and family.

> *…so it literally was, if you had a sandwich you had to decide did you want butter on it or did you want jam (Naomi, 13, 65).*

During this time, Naomi had had infrequent and irregular contact with her father, and a poor relationship with her mother. Reflecting on this, she commented:

> *…so teenage years to say the least were really difficult, because I just wanted a parent (Naomi, 16, 101).*

Although the family's financial situation improved as Naomi and her siblings got older, her relationship with her mother did not. Her response to the emotional neglect that she experienced was to work hard at her studies and, as soon as she was able, leave school and find employment. Although she had been employed in part-time jobs whilst at school, the financial independence that her full-time salary gave her, along with the ability to make a meaningful contribution to the household budget, increased her sense of autonomy and self-worth. Still proud of her achievement when we met, she said:

> *…and I earned a thousand pounds which I think is very good for a seventeen year old, she (Naomi's mother) took four hundred pound of it rent (Naomi, 16, 117).*

Kirsten expressed anger about the environment in which she had been raised. She had grown up with her mother and half-sister. Her parents had separated when she was a baby, and her father had been absent for long periods of her life. Her mother had been a heavy drinker, and Kirsten had had a series of 'uncles to contend with' (13, 123). By contrast, her half-sister, five years older, spent each weekend with her father and his new family. She explained:

> *I remember having to be kind of like the perfect child I remember the little pink dresses with the frilly collars and the little frilly socks and the black shiny shoes, and my mum sitting me down in the corner with like a magazine and a blue panda pot full of e-numbers sitting there going, "Right, sit there and be a good girl. Mummy's just going to have a drink and we'll have a roast dinner later", and that kind of thing you know (Kirsten, 10, 123).*

Kirsten's closest bond had been with her foster mother, Ellen, with whom she had been placed periodically for respite. They had remained close beyond Kirsten's childhood; indeed, Ellen had been present at the birth of Kirsten's first child. Her own mother had been jealous of this relationship, evidenced by her behaviour when, some years later, Ellen died. Having told Kirsten that, in order to support her, she would accompany her to Ellen's funeral, in the event she failed to consider her daughter's emotional needs:

…and my mum said, "Oh, I'll come to the funeral with you. I'll support you", and coming out of the church she started singing "Ding dong, the witch is dead"[25] (Kirsten, 13, 137).

Although Kirsten acknowledged that, materially, she 'never went without anything' (10, 123), her half-sister's situation had given her a keen awareness of what family life could look like and what, in emotional terms, she was missing:

…and she had that kind of normality and stability whereas I didn't it was always whatever boyfriend my mum had at that moment in time (Kirsten, 13, 123).

Whilst her relationship with her foster mother had provided her with some sense of stability and of being cherished, Ellen's premature death had denied her the benefits of any longer-term nurturance. Kirsten's mother's jealousy of this bond, and her indifference to her grief, merely reinforced Kirsten's already keen mistrust of her.

Kim's parents had separated when she was young, and both had formed new relationships. However, the contrast between her parents' new partners was striking and, according to Kim, had led to resentment on her mother's part. She described her stepfather thus:

He's not a family orientated person at all, he'll just be like up in my mum's bedroom or whatever, and um yeah, not my idea of happy families (Kim, 11, 210).

She continued:

I think my mum is sort of a bit jealous of my dad because my dad has remarried, and his marriage is solid, and they are happy, and they've got a nice house (Kim, 11, 250).

When Kim and her siblings were younger, they had had regular contact with their father and step-mother:

…we used to <u>love</u> going over to my dad's house because my step-mum did used to spoil us and everything, …but we used to get encouraged to mess around, yeah, when we used to go over there, which is like really wrong ((laughs)) (Kim, 11, 250).

Her mother's efforts to damage their relationship with their father, by encouraging them to misbehave when visiting, had eventually succeeded; he began to make excuses to avoid having Kim and her sister for visits, but continued to spend time with, and 'spoil', their younger brother. Although they later repaired their relationship, for several years the older two children had no contact with their father.

Whilst they did not consider themselves to have been physically neglected, Kirsten, Naomi and Kim felt that they had been affected by their parent's failure to respond sufficiently to their emotional needs.

Child abuse

Only one participant considered that she had been abused during her childhood. Olivia had experienced multiple forms of abuse, and the impact of these had been profound. She had, on many occasions, witnessed her father 'batter(ing) the shit out of' (15, 128) her mother, also named Olivia, and she and her two siblings had also been victims of his extreme

[25] "Ding-Dong! The Witch is Dead" is a song from the film, "The Wizard of Oz". In the film, Dorothy's house is dropped on Wicked Witch of the East by the tornado. The Munchkins sing the song in celebration of the fact that she is dead.

violence. On several occasions, her mother had attempted to leave her father. Eventually, when Olivia was eight or nine years old, her mother fled the family home; she had been unable to escape with her children, and had been forced to leave them behind. The three children were then separated; Olivia's brother and sister were sent to live with two other local families, while she remained with her father. Shortly after this, Olivia's father began having sex with her. He continued to do so until, a year or two later, her mother was able to return and take her children to safety. Olivia was not permanently reunited with her mother and siblings until she was nine or ten years old, and her mother was in a stable relationship with her step-father. By this time, she had experienced several years of physical and, latterly, sexual abuse at the hands of her father.

Olivia had not told anyone about the nature of her relationship with her father and, without the language with which to construct it as abusive, had struggled to make sense of his behaviour. As a child, her view had been that she had reluctantly assumed the role her mother had performed before she left. She 'saw him breaking his heart every night and crying' (18, 178), and explained:

> *…before my mummy left I was always 'Livvy', and then when my mummy left all of a sudden it was 'Olivia' (20, 185).*
>
> *…only in my little life because I think he used to think, 'cos my mum was (several hundred miles away), …and like he used to call me in (to his bedroom), and I'd say, "What", and he'd go, "Olivia", and it'd be, I got to say it wasn't <u>serious</u> do you know what I mean, but it still wasn't nice, and um, I didn't like it, really, but I felt, I felt sorry for my dad, do you know what I mean (Olivia, 17, 459-463).*

In her forties when we met, Olivia still did not position her father as a child sexual abuser, and revisited this subject more than once during our conversations. Each time, she asserted that his sexual abuse of her was due to his emotional state as a result of her mother's departure, and heavy drinking:

> *…he was always drunk when he did what he did (Olivia, 14, 14).*
>
> *…I mean my dad didn't know what he was doing I don't think, well he <u>didn't</u> know what he was doing, of <u>course</u> he didn't… (Olivia, 17, 431)*

When discussing the reasons for his physical abuse, however, she was less equivocal:

> *…but with the beatings and the violence side of things, he didn't have to be fucking drunk there, he would just come home from work and find I didn't have the dinner ready or something he's just fucking grrrr (Olivia, 18, 110).*

Olivia's reunification with her mother and siblings did not go smoothly. She described having had conflicted feelings about her mother:

> *I really loved her and, I still do, but I resented her I think for years, because when you're a child you don't understand, …you know how could you leave and not take me (20, 131)*
>
> *I couldn't <u>imagine</u>, …because my mum was in a terrible situation there (20, 355)*

and resentment of her stepfather's presence:

I just carried on (winding him up) I didn't stop, …and it caused arguments between him and my mum it was awful, but I think I was trying to split them up ((laughs)), you know I wanted my little family back together (18, 200).

She reflected that this had made her behaviour difficult to live with, and had led to frequent rows:

…they just thought I was a problem child, …if I won't listen what can they do, do you know what I mean (20, 293).

…but it was wrong what my mum and (stepfather) were doing bringing me up, "You're always like your father", "Leave me a-fucking-lone", I used to say to him, but my mum used to say it as well, but I think that's because I caused so much trouble, you know I drove them mad (21,419).

The atmosphere that this caused in the household had been unsettling for the whole family. When she was fifteen years old, Olivia met Joe, twenty years her senior and the first of several violent and abusive partners. She moved in with him, and gave birth to her first child.

Over many years, Olivia was beaten and abused by a succession of men with whom she had cohabiting relationships. When reflecting on her relationship history, she noted that she had not, at the time, really considered them to be abusive. In trying to account for this, she commented:

…and I think as well Jo because you're, when my daddy used to beat me, you may get confused it's a sign of affection, … I know it sounds stupid and mm mental but, I don't know, I think back then I used to think, "Oh, he does love me", I don't know, I don't know (Olivia, 18, 346).

Later in her childhood she also witnessed the relationship between her mother and step-father. Although, as Olivia noted, it had been strained at times by her behaviour, their relationship was nurturing and mutually respectful.

Parental DVA

In addition to Olivia, two other participants referred to experiencing parental DVA in childhood. Neither Kirsten nor Freya, however, had interpreted their experiences as a 'normal' part of heterosexual relationships. For example, whilst her mother had been abused by more than one of her boyfriends, Kirsten did not consider that she had necessarily been traumatised by it. She described the atmosphere at home as unpleasant rather than frightening, and immediately juxtaposed it with that of her future husband's:

…and I just got to the point where you just can't take any more of the shouting and things being broken and, so I was kind of like I've had enough, …and I think one of the cool things about going to Dave's like in the evening and watching a DVD, and I'd sleep in his room and he'd sleep on the sofa, there was none of that with his mum and dad there, but he had the nice mum and dad and a stable family, and I think there was an attraction to that because I'd never had it, …I just liked being part of that family unit I suppose, the mum the dad, and all that kind of normality (13, 69).

Her view was that, in fact, her early experiences had made her determined not to repeat them; her mother's choice of partners and chaotic lifestyle had fuelled her resolve to settle down with a partner who was more respectful, and have a home life that was more stable:

> *I always wanted, you know the two point four the house the cars, the dog the cat ((laughs)), the kids (13, 367).*

Although as a child she had not defined it as such, Freya also described her experiences of parental domestic abuse. Her father had worked some distance away from the family home; during the week he stayed near to his place of employment, and returned at weekends. She had good relationships with her mother and siblings, and described their weekday existence as 'very cosy'. She explained:

> *I don't recall ever speaking to him during the week, or even thinking about him during the week (Freya, 9, 120).*
>
> *…so it was this balance, this beautiful atmosphere, bubble that we had built for ourselves, and we were quite content during the week and then on the weekend my father came and everything went to pieces, I remember that quite clearly, that sort of sense of <u>unease</u> when he was there (Freya, 7, 126).*

Although she was not unduly fearful of her father's returns home:

> *…I don't recall any anticipatory dread, … but when he was there, it was a knowledge that when he comes it's going to be no fun, (9, 128-132),*

she noted occasions on which his behaviour was distressing:

> *I mean there were instances when he was truly abusive and violent towards my mother, and us at times, so, you know throwing dishes and that sort of thing, threatening my mother with broken glass and whatnot so, you know, shouting really badly, kicking her out of the car, make her walk a mile back home while us children were in the back of the car, you know, in the rain, and at night and, you know, terrified for our mother, um, yeah so that's, he was very definitely abusive (9, 134-136).*

Although Freya found her father's presence disturbing, his limited contact with his family had moderated the impact of his behaviour. It had not unduly distorted her conception that theirs had been a happy home but, when considering what she might want in her own future life partner, it had underlined the importance of choosing carefully:

> *I used to joke that I went half way round the world to find myself a husband and he turned out exactly like my father ((laughing)) (9, 388).*

Like Kirsten, Freya's exposure to parental DVA had motivated her to consciously avoid, rather than tolerate, abuse in her own intimate relationships.

First encounters with perpetrators

In order to understand how the women in my study entered the relationships that would go on to be abusive, I encouraged them to tell me about their first encounters with their abusers. Physical proximity had been a factor in most women's accounts of these meetings. Thirteen women described having met their partners locally, at university or college, at

work, in social settings that they frequented, or had been introduced by members of their family or friends; one participant had met her partner online.

Simone, Carmen and Olivia all described having drifted into a relationship with someone who had been, at the time, simply part of the fabric of their lives. In each case, the man who would go on to abuse them had lived locally and moved in the same social spheres that they did; this meant that they encountered them on a regular basis, in a variety of settings, before they became involved with them. As Carmen explained:

> *…and he was just one of the lads that used to hang out on the estate, …then we got talking one day, and we got on really well, um, I think he asked me to go shopping with him one day, …and we had a really good day so we just hit it off from there (Carmen, 5, 35).*

Freya talked about the way in which she, too, had drifted into a relationship with her future husband. She had planned a gap year before going to university and, at eighteen years' old, had come to the UK from mainland Europe to improve her English. She was working as an au pair when they met. She and her female friends got together regularly in a local pub, and he was one of a group of men who socialised in the same venue. She described the circumstances:

> *…and yeah we met at the pool tables, basically, …it was our favourite pub, well, me and my friends, so we just went there, and he just happened to be there and things developed from there, …they, the boys were in a flat share.... and some of my friends were getting involved with the other guys (in the group), …and that's how things developed from there (Freya, 9, 44).*

At the time, Freya had had no plans to begin a serious relationship with someone in the UK; she noted that she was:

> *…away from home for the first time, gathering some experience, with a view of going back home and studying, you know, starting my life back home (Freya, 9, 50).*

Although when they first met she had shown no interest, her husband, who was eleven years her senior, had flirted with her persistently; after a while his efforts were rewarded, and they began a relationship. Reflecting on the possible reasons for her change of heart, she commented:

> *I think I felt... complimented, you know, …flattered, by his attention, and by his fairly obvious interest in me (Freya, 9, 48).*

Whilst Freya had gradually been won over by his attention, and had drifted into her relationship with her future husband, Nombeko had exercised a greater level of agency. She had been much clearer with her admirer about what she expected from a relationship, telling him that her mother and father had never married, and why she wanted her own life to be different from theirs. She explained:

> *Although both my parents were from the same tribe, they were from different classes of the tribe, …he was a higher class, and my mother was a lower class and um he was told he couldn't marry her (29, 45).*

As was common practice within her culture, when Nombeko was born she became the responsibility of her father's family. She spent the first five years of her life with her mother, but had then been sent to live with her paternal grandmother. Both of her parents had gone

on to marry new partners and have children. Nombeko's bond with her grandmother had been very close, but she regretted that she had not been able to live with her parents and half-siblings. For her own children, she had wanted a stable, nuclear family. She and her future husband had met as student nurses in their early twenties at college in England. Being from the same southern African country had given them things in common in addition to their chosen profession and, at the point he declared a romantic interest in her, they had already known each other for some time.

> *…he sort of um approached me and said he did like me and he thought it would be nice if we had a relationship and all that (Nombeko, 29, 91).*

Nombeko had been attracted to him, and had considered that he 'was a nice person who could be husband material' (29, 91). She had explained to him, at the outset, her conditions:

> *"I don't just date for the sake of it", because …I came from a Christian family where you did not just date men, and have a sexual relationship before you even married, "…that's not how I do things so if you decide that I possibly can be your wife then yeah we can start dating" (Nombeko, 29, 91).*

Having carefully established his commitment to a courtship rather than a casual romance, and gained his agreement that this would be monogamous, Nombeko felt that they had the foundations of a happy and enduring relationship.

Kim, too, seemed to have had clear ideas about what she wanted from a relationship. Before they started dating, she had met her future husband a few times while 'out clubbing' with friends. She had left home at eighteen and, by her mid-twenties, had a stable job and her own flat. Most of her friends had started families and, although she 'didn't just want to have children by just anybody' (11, 300), she felt ready to settle down. When asked what had first attracted her to her future husband, Kim commented:

> *He was confident, seemed to know where he was going in life, seemed to come from a good family, all that sort of thing (Kim, 11, 156).*

Unlike many of the men she had encountered, he seemed intelligent and emotionally literate, professionally ambitious, and had similar views to her own on issues that she considered to be important such as a desire for children, and preferred parenting styles. Kim's view was that, in meeting this man, she had 'landed on her feet' (11,342).

Naomi and her future husband met at work. She was in her late teens; he was in his mid-thirties, and married with two children. Initially, their interactions had consisted of no more than 'a bit of a joke and a flirt' (16, 125) but, having separated from his wife, he began to find work-related excuses to telephone her. Because of her own childhood experience of parental divorce, she felt that she understood some of the issues that he and his children were experiencing. She explained:

> *…so really a lot of our initial conversations were about him and what he was going through …and I felt sorry for him, you know …looking back now I realise that was part of the manipulation (Naomi, 16, 127-129).*

Naomi had been attracted to him since they had first met and felt that she had got to know him quite well:

> *…and he was an attractive man, …but he was married, so I didn't ever think anything of it, and I got to know him quite well and then someone said to me, "Oh Charles split*

up with his wife", I actually remember being fairly like "Oh, okay, that's interesting" (13, 125).

Eventually, he invited her on a date. They began a relationship but, because of her spiritual beliefs, it was conducted in secret.

I came from a religious background, so I wasn't supposed to date people outside of my religion, so that suited him quite fine, 'cos it meant no one would know that we were seeing each other (16, 129-133).

At eighteen, Kamala had gone to university. She had been enthusiastic about her studies and had quickly made a new circle of friends via the Students' Union (SU). It was here that she met her future husband. As she got to know him, she learned that he was not, in fact, studying at the university but merely frequented the SU bar.

…me and my friends would go out, he knew one of my friends and he'd invite himself so kind of got himself into the group, without being noticed so to speak, then he asked me out (Kamala, 14, 65).

Marcia had married twice, first in her early twenties and again three or four years later. She had had other relationships about which she spoke positively. For example, she described one of her boyfriends thus:

…and he was actually the son of my mum's best friend, bless him, and he was so innocent and so sweet, …but he was going off travelling round the world (Marcia, 3, 393-397).

However, each of her husbands had gone on to abuse her. She had been introduced to both of her future husbands at social events hosted by members of her family. Each had been working in businesses owned by members of her family, and had been held up by them as exemplary employees and decent people.

Leonie and Colette had met their partners via friends. Colette, for example, first met her husband when they were both seventeen. She was working for a large, well known department store, and he was the brother of one of her female colleagues with whom she had become friends. She recalled:

…his family just had loads of parties, it was an absolutely brilliant time actually, between the ages of um seventeen …till twenty-one I just went to, it was just always a party on (4, 186).

Colette had been strongly attracted to her future husband from the first time they had met but had assumed, because he had never asked her out, that he did not feel the same way. It was only three or four years later that she was disabused of this belief:

…and what happened was, it was at his twenty-first birthday party, he danced with me, and I thought, "Actual fact you <u>do</u> like me", and that's when I sent him a belated birthday present, saying happy birthday, knowing that he'd have to come and say thank you for it (4, 210).

Colette's plan worked; her husband subsequently invited her on a date, and they began a relationship.

Kirsten's future husband was the son of one of her father's work colleagues. Initially, she had thought him 'a bit of a geek' (13, 10) but, one summer when they were both sixteen,

their fathers had taken them to work with them; she got to know him, and found that she was attracted to him.

> *I'd say it was his personality that attracted me more than looks, initially, you see he was funny, I'd say that, 'cos he was my fir- I mean the only person that I've been with as well, he laughed me into bed kind of thing ((laughs)) above the being good looking and having the phwoah[26] factor I just thought he was, he was funny (13, 41).*

Eve had separated from, but remained on good terms with, the father of her six-year-old daughter. The boyfriend of one of her female friends had been serving a short prison sentence and Eve was persuaded to accompany her friend on one of her visits to the prison. His cellmate noticed Eve, and later asked if she might visit him. Initially, she was unenthusiastic:

> *I thought I don't want to get involved in something like that, you know, it's not my scene, and I of course was quite happy living my own life, and er ((laughs)) but I thought, "Oh yeah", I sort of felt sorry for him sort of thing you know, "He needs a visit" (6, 54).*

Eve had been told that his crime had been non-payment of fines and, because she felt sorry for him, she began visiting him. (Only much later did she discover that the offence for which he had been incarcerated had been burglary.) Once he had completed his sentence and been released, they continued to see each other.

One participant had met her future partner online. Ruth was in her mid-thirties, and had recently separated on amicable terms from her previous partner. Although she would have preferred a rural environment, she was living and working in a large city; her newly single status provided an opportunity to revisit these choices and plan the next chapter of her life. A keen cyclist, she decided to arrange a few cycling holidays to learn more about parts of the country in which she might settle. She searched online for websites that would connect her with other cycling enthusiasts, and was pleasantly surprised at how quickly she had made new friends. She said:

> *…and then um, this chap seemed very very excited at seeing me, and to meet up with me, and I remember thinking at the time, "Well, wow, this is sudden" because he said, "Right, I'll come up and see you tonight, I'll you know I've got a camper van, we can stay in that" and I thought, "Now hang on a minute", …and so we made the date a bit in the future, and I said, "Well come to (city) and we'll go cycling" and yeah it sort of went from there (25, 75).*

Ruth described her new acquaintance as 'very charming and charismatic' (25, 77), and acknowledged that she had been deeply flattered and swept up by his excitement and enthusiasm. Reflecting on this, she noted:

> *…now I see he almost sort of asked very clever questions to see what I was about, and then posed being that person, I think, but it seemed incredibly genuine at the time. I now realise there was no substance to it whatsoever, he was just reading my wishes and my reactions to what he was saying, and it was a real sort of fabrication, so that's, that was my transition from then to meeting him (25, 81).*

[26] 'Phwoah' is an informal exclamation used to express sexual desire.

Courtship

I was interested in participants' perceptions of the period between meeting their partner and committing to a more enduring relationship with him (which, for eleven women, had been evinced by marriage), and the extent to which they might have anticipated his future abuse.

All fourteen participants described in positive terms the early stages of their relationships. None had identified, at the time, any concerns about their partners' behaviour towards them, and many described how attentive and considerate their partners had been. For example:

> *…he was like, came across as the perfect person (Kim, 11, 496).*
>
> *…and my friends would think, "God he", you know, "he couldn't do more for you", and you know we'd go out and he'd hold the doors open, pulls out chairs, that kind of stuff (Kirsten, 13, 378).*
>
> *…within sort of few months he moved in, and he was absolutely you'd think the best thing ever, you know done everything like cooked, cleaned, done literally everything, was amazing with my daughter, you know and stuff like that, looking back I think yeah of course, it's like a bit like grooming isn't it (Eve, 6, 87).*

Another participant, Colette, noted that her mother had been an alcoholic; she was impressed that her new boyfriend did not drink and, when they were out together, encouraged her to moderate her own intake:

> *I think he was very protective, …I thought you know he really cared about my wellbeing (4, 246).*

Her view at the time was that he was attentive, caring, and sophisticated:

> *…and he did things like we went to um took me to a Chinese restaurant, and he showed me how to eat with chopsticks, and it was just so romantic and so lovely, …he really was very very, it seemed very loving (Colette, 4, 246).*

Both of Marcia's husbands, first Simon and then Laurence, had also been loving and attentive during their courtship. By the time she met Laurence, she had experienced the loss of her parents and grandparents, and had suffered two years of Simon's abuse. In the early stages of their relationship, Laurence had been 'completely charming, thoughtful, look(ed) after everybody' (1, 567). He was distantly related to one of Marcia's uncles, but had only become a significant presence when her aunt had been suddenly and unexpectedly widowed. He worked hard to maintain her aunt's business until she was able to resume control, and then went to work in another of Marcia's family's businesses. Here, too, he proved to be an invaluable asset, and was thought of very highly by her relatives. With Marcia, who was keen to move on with her life whilst processing her grief, he had been protective, comforting, and an excellent listener:

> *He kept promising me he wouldn't be like that, all my fears and worries, that I expressed, all the situations we talked over, he said he would never do that, he said he would never harm <u>me</u> (Marcia, 1, 533-541).*

Although no participants identified any concerns about their partners' behaviour toward them, three women had become aware that their partners had shortcomings. However, rather than construct these as perturbing character flaws, they had believed that, with their

help, the men would be able to overcome their problems. Simone, for example, had stated that her partner 'was good fun, good company' (27, 110) but had discovered, early in their relationship, that he was using crack cocaine. She explained:

> *…but that didn't bother me too much, it didn't put me off him as a person, but I kind of thought that um I could help him come off of it? …because he's a nice person I felt sorry for him and I wanted to help him, …he used to give me the impression that he really wanted to come off of it, and I'd seen him try really hard (Simone, 27, 116).*

Marcia had felt that, whilst Laurence clearly had skills of value to an employer, his lack of professional self-confidence had held him back. She believed that, with her encouragement and support, he would eventually overcome his diffidence and find more satisfying and financially rewarding work.

When talking about Martin, one of the men who had gone on to abuse her, Olivia noted his surprise at how demonstrably affectionate she was with her mother. She explained:

> *…poor wee fellah, he was abused, he was totally abused, his daddy abused him his mum didn't kiss him, didn't have no love, so you see he didn't know how to show love (Olivia, 17, 213).*

Olivia assumed from his behaviour toward her that he loved her; his only difficulty was in being able to express his emotions. She believed that, by demonstrating her own feelings for him, he would in time learn to reciprocate.

All three women considered that their relationship was fundamentally sound, and helping their partners to manage their problems was simply a normal part of intimacy. In their view, the strength of the bond between them, and their own determination to provide support, would be sufficient to resolve the issues.

In addition to their partners' impeccable behaviour toward them, another consistent theme of these courtships was their intensity. The speed with which the relationships moved from first date to longer term commitment was a significant factor in women's accounts. For most of the women, from meeting to cohabitation/marriage had only taken a few months, and all had reached this point within a year.

For Naomi and her partner, discovering that she was pregnant had prompted their decision to marry quickly, but other participants described the men putting them under significant pressure. Eve, for example, noted that she had never really considered getting married, but her partner had been extremely keen. She explained:

> *…apparently he's always wanted to get married and you know, it made it more <u>secure</u>, …made things more secure in us, that's what he was saying (Eve, 6, 206).*

Eve had interpreted his desire for commitment to a more permanent relationship, and his sense of urgency, as indicators of the strength of his feelings for her. Although it was not something to which she had given much previous thought, she was content to indulge his wishes, and agreed to marry.

Ruth acknowledged that, in her late thirties, she had 'completely fallen for' her partner. He appeared to be 'everything that she had ever wanted in a man' in that he was passionate about her, had similar aspirations to her own, and was charming toward her family and friends. Early on in their relationship, he had emphasised her declining fertility as the reason for his haste to marry:

> *He then said, "Well we both know we love one another, we're right for one another, we're both absolutely certain, er you're getting on a bit, …let's get married as soon as possible 'cos, you know you don't want to run out of baby-making time", kind of thing (Ruth, 23, 113).*

During the courtship period, participants had experienced no concerns about their partners' feelings for them. Certain behaviours that they came to recognise as controlling only much later were, at the time, construed as either protective and loving or as a sign of his insecurity. Three participants did mention that their families had had 'niggling doubts' (Freya, 9, 360) about their new partners. Freya, Marcia and Ruth learned much later that certain close family members had been concerned that their partners were 'too good to be true'. However, in the absence of any concrete evidence of ill-intentions, and not wishing to cast a shadow on the woman's happiness, none had expressed any concerns at the time.

The intensity of these courtships, and the pace at which they proceeded, left little opportunity for women to learn about their partners' relationships with other people. At the time, most women seemed not to notice this gap in their partners' narratives of self, but some had probed them for more information. Ruth, for example, had a wide circle of friends with whom she had regular contact; she had noticed that her partner did not. When she had asked about this, he had told her that all of his close friends lived abroad, and were therefore unable to play a more significant part in his day-to-day life.

For Ruth and Marcia, their weddings had provided the first real sign of anything untoward about their partners' circles of friends and family. Despite their fiancés' preference for a small wedding with very few guests, both brides' families had insisted on rather lavish events. They had been surprised and slightly embarrassed by how few of the grooms' invitations had been accepted. Marcia, for example, said:

> *We had a lovely wedding, I had like a hundred people from, who were my friends and family, and he had about three, four people, he just had his parents, and an aunty and uncle, and a best friend (1, 35).*

In each case, their partners' guests had been greatly outnumbered by their own friends and family, and only once they were married did they realise that their husbands had no enduring friendships. Later in our conversation, when asked how frequently her husband had kept in contact with his family and friends, Marcia responded:

> *Well they didn't, the best friend lived far away so no we only ever saw him at the wedding ((laughing)) when he was best man really, and maybe once after that, or twice (3, 357).*

Ruth commented on her husband, a teacher:

> *…he actually didn't have any friends, he had acquaintances he had people that he worked with (Ruth, 23, 160).*

Later in our conversation, she noted:

> *…his inner circle is very small ((laughs)), and quite superficial I mean they're, you know, he's in with the headmaster, he's in with the deputy head, I mean true male friendship he doesn't have any male friendships (Ruth, 25, 341).*

Once she and her husband had separated, Ruth had traced his ex-wife; one of the questions she had put to her was about his friends who were living overseas:

> *…and she said, "Oh these people exist but they worked him out", and they're certainly not you know he would say, "Oh I'm godfather to their children", it was all absolute fabrication (Ruth, 25, 341).*

None of the women talked about their partners having close friendships; if the men socialised at all, their relationships tended to be instrumental rather than mutually enriching. For example, in a continuation of her earlier point, Ruth said:

> *...but mostly, they were people that were useful to him, …he used people, if someone he felt was useful, he would cultivate them and then they'd be dropped (Ruth, 23, 160).*

Only two of the men had been in regular contact with their immediate families; others had cool or distant relationships with their parents and siblings or, in some cases, had no contact with them at all.

Preliminary interpretation of results

As noted in Chapter 1, researchers have identified a range of adverse conditions that are considered to render heterosexual women at greater risk of experiencing DVA. Poverty, disability, problematic substance use, mental ill health, personal inadequacy (notions of 'victim mentality' and masochism, for example) and negative childhood intrafamilial experiences have all been proposed as risk factors. The presence or absence of these characteristics is said to determine the level to which someone is vulnerable to abuse, and being exposed to more than one of these 'risk factors' is considered to increase women's vulnerability (see, for example, Anda et al. 2006; Whitfield et al. 2003). I began this chapter by reporting the extent of participants' exposure, prior to meeting their abuser, to these risk factors. Here, I draw on the literature to discuss what this might mean for participants, and academic knowledge.

A large NSPCC study (Radford et al. 2011), involving interviews with more than 6,000 parents, guardians and young people, examined the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in the UK. The study found that, by the age of seventeen years, 13.4% of children and young people had experienced severe maltreatment[27] by a parent or guardian, and 4.8% had experienced contact child sexual abuse. In terms of their vulnerability to DVA, participants in my study were not dissimilar to the wider population of girls and women in the UK.

The women in my study came from a variety of sociocultural and economic backgrounds, and most of them described childhoods untouched by abuse. Nine participants did not consider themselves to have been exposed to any of the risk factors for DVA. Only five women described earlier experiences that might be considered to render them more vulnerable to abuse and, of these, two had experienced more than one form of adversity. Kim and Naomi had felt emotionally neglected by their parents; Freya had witnessed her father's abuse of her mother; Kirsten had experienced parental DVA and emotional neglect, and had been diagnosed with BPD; and Olivia had experienced physical and sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect, and parental DVA.

[27] In the study by Radford et al (2011), 'maltreatment' is defined as: "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power."

Kirsten had been diagnosed in adolescence with BPD. However, she also described having had an unsettled and emotionally neglectful childhood. The issue of BPD diagnosis has been the subject of much debate - not least because of the extent to which women are represented in prevalence figures; they make up 75% of those identified as having a BPD (American Psychiatric Association 2013). Feminists have, for many years, been critical of such diagnoses, and argue that much of the psychological and psychiatric literature is 'the ideology of a masculinist society dressed up as objective truth' (Ehrenreich and English 2005). Researchers have shown that the development of a personality disorder is frequently associated with childhood abuse trauma (Warner and Wilkins 2003), most victims of which are female. For example, girls and young women experience significantly higher rates of severe parental maltreatment than boys and young men (Radford et al. 2011). Because BPD is defined only with regard to its effects, the social aspects of trauma remain hidden (Warner 2009). This allows young women like Kirsten, who respond with anger and aggression to gendered abuse and oppression, to be pathologised; they are constructed as either 'mad' or 'bad', rather than as socially damaged by their experiences (for further discussion of these feminist arguments see, for example, Hornstein 2013; Shaw and Proctor 2005; Ussher 2011; Warner 2009). Viewed through this lens, it is possible that Kirsten's dysfunctional home life and emotional neglect was the root cause of her challenging behaviour; the diagnosis of BPD had merely served to occlude the reasons for her instability.

Child neglect, whilst passive, is considered a form of abuse, and is defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's needs. This can include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, their basic emotional needs (HM Government, 2010). Unlike child abuse, which involves action by another person that causes significant harm, neglect is characterised by *inaction* on the part of those charged with caring for the child. Although it is unlikely that any of the participants in my study would have reached the threshold for social work intervention, and all of their physical needs (food, shelter, clothing, etc.) had been met, four of the fourteen women felt that they had been emotionally neglected during their childhoods. Kirsten, Naomi and Kim all described parents who had been emotionally absent, and fathers who had also been physically absent, while they were growing up. In addition to emotional neglect, Olivia had also experienced other forms of abuse, but all four had been conscious of their parents' failure to be concerned about, or meet, their emotional needs, and this had shaped their aspirations for their own adult relationships. Each had been determined to seek stability, reliability, love and affection in future partners.

Olivia had experienced multiple forms of abuse during her childhood. She, her siblings and her mother had been victims of her father's violent abuse. When her mother left, she had been prevented from taking her children with her, and Olivia experienced deep feelings of abandonment. She had then been separated from her siblings, who were sent to live with two other local families, and left alone with her father. His physical and emotional abuse continued, and he also began sexually abusing her. The effects of her father's physical, emotional and sexual abuse had been profound and, as an adult, she experienced physical violence and abuse from a succession of men with whom she had cohabiting relationships.

Olivia's narrative, interpreted from a traditional perspective, lends some support to the notion that women exposed to men's abuse in childhood develop a greater tolerance of DVA. However, whilst some studies show an association between women as victims of domestic violence and their childhood experiences of abuse (Black et al. 2010; Franklin and Kercher 2012; Kerley et al. 2010), the notion of a straightforward intergenerational

transmission is problematic. Olivia observed her mother being abused by her father, but she also observed her mother's rejection of the abuse when she fled the relationship. Furthermore, later in her childhood she was exposed to the relationship between her mother and step-father, which was nurturing and mutually respectful.

Olivia's repeated victimisation in her adult relationships, and her difficulty in distinguishing between 'love' and 'abuse', suggest that her early experiences may have shaped her perceptions of heterosexual relationships. Having no resources with which to conceptualise her father's behaviour as abusive, she came to understand men's violence toward her as an expression of affection rather than one of domination and control.

Similarly, the 'unease' that Freya refers to when describing her abusive father's presence indicates the importance of having access to a discursive repertoire for understanding one's experiences. Without a language with which to name his behaviours and articulate her disquietude, she was unable at the time to conceptualise what she was exposed to as DVA. Catherine Ashcraft's (2000) 'Matrix of Domestic Control' (see Chapter 1) is useful because it renders his behaviours visible. His frequent put-downs and threats, and his control of his family's activities, constituted (active) domestic domination; his absences, emotional distance and refusal to consult on decisions can be seen as passive domestic neglect.

The notion that exposure to certain experiences increases the risk of entering an abusive relationship in adulthood is overly simplistic and deterministic. For four of the five women in my study who had been exposed to these risk factors, their experiences were nuanced, and mitigated by protective factors such as close bonds with significant others. Furthermore, all five women's experiences had shaped their aspirations for their own intimate relationships; it had made them keen to strenuously avoid, rather than repeat, those experiences. The question of how much agency participants were able to exercise on meeting the men who would go on to abuse them, and the extent to which they might have been deceived by the perpetrators in the early stages of those relationships, is picked up later in this chapter, in my discussion of perpetrators' strategies for control.

Notions of vulnerability to, or risk factors for, abuse are rather blunt instruments for explaining women's routes into DVA. They reinforce an idea of the universality of experiences, and lead to deterministic understandings and, ultimately, blaming her later victimisation on her exposure to those adverse conditions. This serves to direct attention away from the perpetrators of abuse, and overlooks the greatest risk factor - that of being female. Beyond participants' shared identity as women who had experienced DVA, they represent a heterogeneous group with few identifiable similarities in terms of their SES, ethnicity or age. In line with the wider population of women and girls, most had been raised in nurturing, supportive families; others talked of less stable childhoods and two women had been exposed to more than one form of adversity. This suggests that DVA does not restrict itself to certain 'types' of women and that any woman could, potentially, be abused.

Despite the majority of participants considering that they had not been exposed to any of the risk factors, they all went on to enter relationships that would, in time, become abusive. That then begs the question, 'What else might have shaped their route into DVA?' Next, I explore this in relation to participants' first encounters with the men who would later abuse them, their early impressions of them and their expectations of the relationship.

What little research has been done on how any couple first meets shows that social homogamy[28] and physical proximity are key. Most people are drawn to others who are similar in terms of sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, class and age (Bozon and Heran 1989; Thomas 2011), and the most common introductions to future partners are via family and friends. Younger people, who are more likely to be in environments such as school, college or university, tend to be surrounded by other young single people, and most will select their future partners from within these groups. Those who do not have access to the same sized pool of potential mates, for example people seeking same-sex partners and older adults, are more likely to use the internet to meet other like-minded people (Rosenfeld and Thomas 2012).

The context for participants' first encounters with their partners did not appear to differ from those of other heterosexual women (Keeling and Fisher 2012). Thirteen women had met their partners locally, at university or college, at work, in social settings that they frequented, or they had been introduced by friends or members of their family. Only one woman, Ruth, had met her partner online through their shared leisure interests. She too, though, had met up with him on several occasions before she considered 'dating' him. For all participants, then, they had been in a position to assess the men, and take soundings from people they trusted, before entering into relationships with them. Although some women later reframed their first encounters in light of the abuse that they had experienced, at the time, the men raised few concerns for them or the people around them. Next, I explore the courtship experiences of participants, i.e. the period between meeting their future partner and cohabiting.

Once two people meet and consider each other of interest, they enter a period in which they get to know each other and decide whether or not to commit to a more enduring relationship. Whilst courtship has taken many forms across different time periods and cultures, generally, in the west, it is perceived to be a social process in which two people establish their agreement to a more enduring romantic relationship. Traditionally, a couple did not live together unless and until they married; more recently, cohabitation has either formed part of a courtship that leads to marriage or has represented an alternative to marriage (Manning et al. 2007). In 2016 in the UK, approximately three quarters of couples living together were married (ONS 2016b).

Research is lacking on the early stages of what become abusive relationships (Keeling and Fisher 2012; Olsen 2004), but none of the participants in my study entered the relationship thinking that they wanted to be, or would be, abused. In each case, their perception was that they had simply drifted into a relationship with someone who moved in similar social circles, in line with notions of social homogamy and physical proximity, and/or he had seemed 'the perfect partner'. All fourteen women spoke in positive terms about their courtships, and many described how attentive, considerate, caring and protective their partners had been. Women had later reframed some of these early impressions and had come to recognise 'early warning signs' that they had missed. At the time, however, they had had no sense of their partners' capacity for abuse.

As has been noted with regard to their vulnerability to DVA, women's first encounters and courtships with the men who would go on to abuse them were not markedly different from those of couples more generally. Each participant's route into what would become an

[28] 'Social homogamy' is the tendency for individuals to seek out others who are in some culturally important way, similar to them.

abusive relationship was unique to the individual. At the time, none of the women had considered themselves to be vulnerable, by virtue of their prior experiences, to abuse. Nor did they perceive their new partners to be anything less than decent men. Where the men's shortcomings were noticed, participants constructed these as minor and, with their love and support, easily resolvable. The only factors common to all their accounts were the speed and intensity of their courtships. In the UK, the average length of courtship is two and a half to three years (Marie Claire 2008). However, for most of the women in my study, from meeting to cohabitation/marriage had only taken a few months, and all had reached this point within a year.

Thus far, the spotlight has focussed on the women themselves. I have discussed what they brought to the relationship, in terms of prior experiences that might have made them vulnerable to abuse; how they met; and their understanding of their courtship experiences. Whilst some participants had experienced a level of adversity prior to meeting their partners, those experiences were not markedly different from the wider population of women more generally. Similarly, their accounts of their courtships did not, at first glance, seem unusual. A poststructuralist feminist perspective allows for the consideration of additional aspects that research into women's experiences of DVA often leaves unexamined. In the next section, I shorten the focal length of my spotlight beam, and increase the area that it illuminates.

Feminist poststructuralist interpretation: cultural scaffolding of DVA

At the start of intimate relationships in general, whether they go on to become abusive or otherwise, there are a number of influences on people's behaviour and the ways in which they interpret events. A range of cultural tropes, together with popular discourses, provide the milieux in which they experience and make sense of the developing relationship. Traditional romance narratives equate heterosexual partnership with happiness, and the goal of these partnerships is reproduction (Chung 2007). These narratives draw on a very particular model of masculinity, in which men are seen as more violent in general, having power over women, emotional self-control, and greater vitality, resources and status (Backus and Mahalik 2011). The romantic discourse available to heterosexual women, in which they are 'swept off their feet' by a 'knight in shining armour', is shaped by powerful metaphors from folk tales (McCrea 2012) and reinforced in popular culture [see, for example, the (Marshall 1990) film, 'Pretty Woman', a modern retelling of 'Cinderella'].

Similarly, the notion that girls and women provide a civilising influence for boys and men (Jackson 2002; Mills and Lingard 2010; Reed 1999) has been firmly embedded in our culture since at least the early eighteenth century (Shoemaker 2013). In Beauty and the Beast, a popular folk tale, Beauty sees past the Beast's ugliness and bad behaviour to the good person underneath. McCrea (2012, p17) suggests that men who are only motivated by their own self-interests or, to use his language, 'jerks', often draw on this discourse as a strategy for entrapping their partners. The ideas that 'you can help me become a better person' or 'you bring out the best in me' are compelling rhetorical devices for persuading women to continue to invest in a flawed man.

These are powerful discursive repertoires, and they shaped the ways in which participants were able to conceptualise their relationships. All of the women in my study could distinguish between, on the one hand, behaviours that constitute a healthy and nurturing

heterosexual relationship and, on the other, abuse. However, between these two conceptualisations lies a considerable space within which the significance of understandings and practices becomes blurred. I am arguing that the dominant discourses on heterosexual intimate relationships, and the practices of which they are constituted, operate as a cultural scaffolding (Gavey 2005) of DVA. In the absence of discourses with which to construct their partners' behaviour as anything other than positive, women tended to draw on dominant romantic narratives to explain their behaviour. When Ruth, for example, described having 'completely fallen for' her partner she implicitly referenced the notion of 'being swept off one's feet'. In speaking about their partners' minor shortcomings, Simone, Marcia, Eve and Olivia had all drawn on the cultural tropes of women as a civilising influence on men and being able to see beyond their character flaws to the good person behind them. Within this space, pressure from participants' partners to move quickly from courtship to longer-term commitment was not perceived to be an oppressive attempt to entrap them but an expression of the strength of their feelings for them. The only available discourses led them to construct their partners' urgency as eagerness to move the relationship into an even more intimate phase.

Of course, women did not rely solely on their own judgement when assessing their partners' suitability; as mentioned earlier, they had also drawn on the opinions of trusted family members and friends. However, this placed their trusted others in an uncomfortable position. Three participants explicitly referred to family members suppressing niggling doubts about their new partner, who seemed 'too good to be true'. They, too, were operating within a 'twilight zone' in which they had not yet received sufficient information with which to make a sound judgement about the developing relationship. By expressing their concerns, they risked casting a shadow on her happiness and, whether or not their concerns later proved to be unfounded, damaging their relationship with her. In the absence of alternative discourses or sound evidence of his ill will, they resisted acting on their doubts. Although well-intentioned, this silence then becomes part of the cultural scaffolding of DVA. For participants, there was congruence in the dominant messages that they received. These messages, from their partners (who were also drawing on the romantic discourse) and from the cultural milieux in which they were situated, shaped the context within which they made judgements about their new relationships.

My focus here has been on the women who participated in my study, and the social and familial milieux within which they made sense of their new relationships. In the next section I explore the actions of the perpetrators during this period. I interrogate women's understandings of this phase of their journeys, and offer an alternative way of conceptualising their partners' behaviour.

Interpreting perpetrators' behaviour: Dark Triad

I am critical of the notion of an essential self consisting of relatively stable personality characteristics; drawing on personality theory to explain the behaviour of perpetrators would be at odds with my feminist poststructuralist position. From this position, I locate the control mechanisms used by perpetrators within heteropatriarchy rather than individual psychopathology. I am examining the cultural scaffolding of DVA, outlined in the previous section, from the point of view of the perpetrator, i.e. as an enabling discourse for abuse. Although I reject personality theory as a way of explaining the behaviour of perpetrators, as

an heuristic device for *describing* those behaviours and interpreting them within the context of the relationship, some of the language used by personality and social psychology theorists is useful.

The Dark Triad (Paulhus 2014; Paulhus and Jones 2015; Paulhus and Williams 2002) of personality consists of three conceptually distinct but overlapping constructs: Narcissism (i.e. grandiosity, egocentrism and a sense of personal entitlement); Machiavellianism (strategic manipulation and alliance building); and psychopathy (callousness, or lack of empathy). The cultural scaffolding of DVA provides a space with opportunities for the perpetrator: the notion of 'Narcissism' fits with the privileges and power of masculinity; 'Machiavellianism' is useful in describing the perpetrator's manipulation of dominant discourses; and 'psychopathy' is characterised by his masculine privileging of self-control, over empathy for his victim. All three constructs in Dark Triad featured prominently in participants' accounts of the later stages of their relationship. However, in this earlier phase, one aspect, Machiavellianism, proved to be a useful tool for providing an alternative interpretation of their partners' behaviour.

Whilst women considered that they had met their future partners by chance, it is entirely likely that they had been deliberately targeted by the men. Thomas Sullivan (2013), in his study of male professionals who sexually abuse the children with whom they work, suggests that such perpetrators are in fact quite discriminating in selecting their victims. Although DVA and child sexual abuse involve different categories of victims, the behaviours of perpetrators follow very similar patterns. Both forms of abuse involve identifying potential victims, followed by a process of target softening in order to create the conditions within which abuse can occur. Sullivan identified three factors in perpetrators' choice of victim: their situational availability; their attractiveness, in terms of either physical characteristics or situational factors; and the perceived ease with which they might be manipulated. The participants in my study are likely to have been assessed by their abusers according to the same criteria. Their accessibility would have been assessed in terms of their proximity; individual (physical and intrapsychic) and situational characteristics (levels of affluence and other tangible 'benefits') would have been judged for attractiveness; and factors such as age differences, levels of parental scrutiny, and emotional stability would have been weighed up in terms of the ease with which they might be manipulated. Having selected their victim, the men began the process of target softening, or grooming (Keeling and Fisher 2012).

In the early stages of a relationship, with relatively little prior knowledge of the person being scrutinised, their behaviour can be difficult to decode. Later on, when these behaviours have begun to form part of a pattern, the possibility of abuse can be explored more vigorously but, in the early phase, they sit stubbornly in the space between what constitutes 'normal' and 'abusive', and no degree of certainty is possible. As discussed in the previous section, in the absence of any alternatives, participants defaulted to a romantic discourse to make sense of their partners' behaviour. However, applying the construct of Dark Triad to the early behaviours of perpetrators offered an alternative way of conceptualising them.

Secrecy featured in several narratives. I interpret secrecy as a Machiavellian strategy, used by the perpetrators, to conceal their past abuse of previous partners and/or their intention to abuse participants in this study. Naomi, for example, noted that she and her partner had kept their relationship hidden from those around them. She had been in her late teens when they met; her partner was in his mid-thirties, and had only recently separated from his wife. The age difference, and the power imbalance that it set up, would undoubtedly have

concerned their work colleagues and her family. Keeping it a secret protected him from any unwelcome challenges from other people. Naomi, because of her spiritual beliefs, had unwittingly colluded in protecting him from the risk of exposure.

Other participants were given very little information about their partners' relationships with other people. At the time, this gap was masked by the speed and intensity of the courtship but, for their partners, it served to restrict and therefore control the knowledge about them that women were able to use. By denying women access to their social and familial networks, the men ensured that they provided the only information on which their partners could make judgements about them. Being free to give an appearance of having close friendships with others, without fear of contradiction, was to effectively deceive participants into thinking of them as congenial and reliable.

Deception was a significant facet of women's accounts of their partners. Again, this can be interpreted as a Machiavellian strategy that serves to distort the information available to women. Eve had been lied to and, had she known the truth at the time, may well have made a different decision about entering a relationship with her partner. He had led her to believe that he had been imprisoned for non-payment of fines when, in fact, his crime had been burglary. For other participants, the deception was achieved by omission rather than actively lying. For example, physical proximity was the context for most first encounters, and Kamala's perception, at the time, was that her future husband was a student at the same university. He 'hung around' the Students' Union bar, as did she and her friends. Only later did she become aware that he was not, in fact, studying; he was actually on the periphery of the student group, and had no close friends within it. No one had had any reason to question his presence. By saying very little, he was able to inveigle his way into her social circle, and deceive Kamala and her friends into considering him 'safe'.

Other participants noted that the men had appeared to be 'the perfect partner'. However, what this meant seemed to vary according to the circumstances of the women they targeted. To Eve, a single mother, her partner appeared to be good with her child and contributed significantly to domestic chores; to Colette, the daughter of an alcoholic, her partner appeared charming, calm and self-controlled; Marcia, who was feeling abandoned, experienced security, protection, comfort and a listening ear. This suggests that the men they encountered were behaving opportunistically and, as Ruth articulated, actively modified their approaches to match whatever the women most wanted or needed.

The little research that has examined women's entry into controlling and abusive relationships indicates that partners are romantic and wooing at first, and their coercive and controlling behaviours escalate over time (Velonis 2016). Many participants described the levels of attention and consideration they had had from their partners during this phase. June Keeling and Colleen Fisher, in their (2012) study of women's early relationship experiences, refer to this as 'the princess effect', one of the tactics used by abusers to gain control. They suggest that the men adjust their behaviour to make the women feel special in order to coerce them into committing to the relationship. Once women become attached, and have developed a loyalty to the relationship, the men have established the climate in which they can subjugate and abuse their partners.

The extreme charm that many women described, combined with the speed and intensity of their courtships, can be reinterpreted as the perpetrators' strategic use of dominant romantic discourses of patriarchy as a mechanism for reducing, as quickly as possible, their

partners' space for action (Kelly and Westmarland 2016). Rather than a romantic display of the strength of his feelings for her, his behaviour can be seen as deception, and applying pressure on her to make a longer-term commitment to him. Significant effort is needed to maintain a congenial profile; by moving the relationship to a point at which he had control, he would no longer have had to expend that energy. Thus, the speed and intensity of courtship, interpreted at the time as passion, love, and/or certainty about finding 'the one', can represent a Machiavellian effort to minimise the amount of time he needed to keep up the pretence.

Applying the lens of Dark Triad also suggested that surveillance and control formed part of the men's behaviour. For example, Colette had been impressed that her partner did not drink alcohol, and had interpreted his concern about her own drinking as 'being protective'. Whilst he may have had very sound reasons for not drinking, to do so would have affected his capacity for vigilance. His disapproval of her drinking could have been a Narcissistic strategy for controlling her behaviour, and her enjoyment. Marcia, who had fled an abusive marriage and had been grieving the loss of both of her parents and two of her grandparents, had found her new partner to be protective, comforting, and an excellent listener. However, whilst providing her with a comforting ear, and encouraging her to talk about her life and aspirations for the future, he was also gathering information that could be used to control her. All of these behaviours were considered at the time by participants to be 'romantic'. However, through the lens of Dark Triad, they can be reinterpreted as strategic manipulation, or a Machiavellian strategy for ensnarement. As McCrea notes with regard to 'jerks':

> *…they are on a specific mission and the courtship process is just a means to an end for them (McCrea 2012, p32).*

Using the lenses of cultural scaffolding and Dark Triad, I have provided an alternative way of interpreting the early stages of participants' relationships. Whilst women considered their choices to have been entered into freely, the space within which they made these choices was heavily circumscribed by the cultural tropes and discourses available to them. The Machiavellian behaviours of their partners made this illusion of choice even more ethereal.

> *A prerequisite to choice is knowledge of what one is choosing. Take the customer who is unwittingly sold an imitation Rolex. She does not choose the fake watch any more than she chooses to be deceived; she believes it is something different. And, logically, the same applies to a person who is deceived as to her partner's identity; she cannot choose to be with that person as such (Gaisford 2013).*

In the early stages of the relationships, their partners' Narcissism and psychopathy were somewhat masked by their apparently generous nature; as I go on to discuss in the next chapter, only once women had developed some level of dependency on their partners did all three traits become clearly visible.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed and interpreted participants' experiences prior to meeting the man who would go on to abuse them, their first encounters with them and courtship. The heterogeneity of their lived experiences prior to meeting the perpetrator is inconsistent with the notions of specific vulnerabilities to DVA that are prevalent in the mainstream

literature. From a feminist poststructuralist perspective, women's early relationship experiences can be read as part of the wider cultural scaffolding of heteropatriarchy which, as revealed through the application of the concept of the Dark Triad, left them exposed to ensnarement and exploitation.

At this stage, my interpretation is preliminary; I only reach firm conclusions about the meaning of the data in Chapter 5, once I have considered each stage of women's journeys. Despite the breadth of their prior experiences, all fourteen women became ensnared in relationships with men who went on to abuse them. From that point on, their lives began to converge; their experiences, once they had committed to the relationship, became far more similar. In the next chapter, I discuss their perceptions of living with abuse.

Chapter 4 'Identity Theft': Living With Abuse

Here, I present the analysis of the second of my themes, 'Living with abuse'. In this chapter, I discuss the stage in participants' journeys from the point at which they had made a longer-term commitment to the relationship with their abuser up until separation. The data items included in this analysis were coded to: early warning signs; identity during the relationship; the meaning of 'home'; the various forms of abuse to which women were subjected (emotional/psychological, financial, physical and sexual); perpetrators' problematic substance use; and women's perceptions of, and explanations for, the abuse. I begin by presenting my data before discussing how women, at the time they were being abused, attempted to make sense of their experiences. Drawing on the available literature, I then present a feminist poststructuralist interpretation of their accounts. In the last section, I focus on the actions of the perpetrators and offer an alternative way of understanding the men's behaviours.

Thematic analysis

In this section, I provide examples of some of the forms of abuse that participants spoke about. Later in the chapter, I interpret them in accordance with Goffman's (1968) processes of 'mortification'. For that reason, my data are organised according to the forms of abuse experienced by participants. I had not asked participants, directly, to describe the ways in which they had been violated. Thus, the accounts presented here were either mentioned spontaneously by women, or offered when asked for clarification of a point that they had raised. Due to limitations of space, it has not been possible to address the full range of behaviours that they talked about. My focus, therefore, is on those aspects that seemed most meaningful for women, and those that appeared to have had the most corrosive effects on their overall sense of wellbeing. Having set out the most significant ways in which they were abused, I present participants' attempts to make sense of their experiences.

Withdrawal of affection

Most participants noted that, once they had made a longer-term commitment to the relationship, their partners' previous attentiveness and affection diminished. Whilst the withdrawal of affection was a feature of most accounts, for three of the ten participants who had married their partners, this began at around the time of their wedding. Marcia, Kamala and Ruth described their new husbands' switch, from being loving, attentive and charming to bullying, unreasonable and cruel, as sudden and shocking. Marcia, for example, had booked the honeymoon suite of a local hotel for their wedding night, from which they set off on their holiday the following morning.

> *So off we went in our car to the honeymoon suite, and he ignored me, the whole night …I didn't know what was happening, so the next day we get, we got up and we went off to, in the car to the airport, and um didn't talk, we didn't have any conversation on the plane, no conversation, got to the hotel, and later that night he said, "Oh yeah, by the way, I was seeing someone else, whilst I was with you", …just kind of casually, he said it (Marcia, 1, 39-43).*

Not only did she feel that his behaviour altered dramatically from that which had preceded their wedding, but also that his cruelty had been expressed for the first time. Taunting her

with his infidelity, on their wedding night, left Marcia feeling humiliated, hurt and confused. She said:

> *…and I was really, really, upset, very tearful, and I think we had dinner every night at the hotel, and I couldn't eat, I was so upset I just couldn't eat, so that made him angry, so that gave him something to, you know to mock me with, and to berate me with, …I was miserable on honeymoon, …came back and ((laughing)) pretended everything was fine (1, 51).*

Kamala's account was strikingly similar. She and her husband had spent their wedding night in a hotel near the airport from where they travelled the following morning. The first time she had had any cause to be concerned about his behaviour was shortly after they arrived at the hotel. She recalled:

> *I'd fallen asleep on the bed, because I was tired, and he's come out of the shower and he's pushed me off the bed, 'cos he was, there was no towel in the bathroom (Kamala, 11, 95).*

She reflected on this incident, saying:

> *I should have walked out then, you know, I should never have got on that plane (Kamala, 11, 95).*

Things did not improve when they got to their destination which, for Kamala, was an idyllic honeymoon location:

> *Oh God it's so gorgeous out there ((both laughing)) …but um so got out to the (honeymoon destination), obviously I want to look round the island, it's an opportunity of a lifetime (Kamala, 11, 103-5).*

She continued:

> *…all he wanted to do was sit by the pool, and drink (Kamala, 11, 105).*

On the first week of their honeymoon, Kamala explored the island in the company of another couple staying at the same hotel; her husband remained, alone, by the pool. During the second week, however, they were joined by members of her family. Kamala noted that her husband's conduct became very different in front of his in-laws; as he had behaved before their wedding, he once again appeared attentive toward her and gave the impression of being completely besotted:

> *Oh, we're so in love sort of thing, …in reality he wasn't making the honeymoon, he was just putting a show on (11, 117).*

Ruth, who had married a teacher, also recalled being shocked by the sudden change in her husband's behaviour. During their courtship, he had been extremely attentive and loving. Once they were married, however, and away on their honeymoon, he ignored her. He spent most of his time reading and, if she made any attempt to communicate with him, he was 'downright unpleasant and, you know, standoffish' (23, 121) toward her and continued reading his book. She said:

> *I spent my honeymoon going for walks on my own, which is not quite how I'd envisaged it (Ruth, 23, 121).*

Other participants noted a similar change in their partners' behaviour toward them. Kim, for example, said:

> *…about two three weeks after I got married I was thinking, "Oh my God, what have I done", seriously, because he just turned into a total control freak (Kim, 11, 500).*

Kim is white British. Her black African partner's previously attentive and affectionate demeanour had been supplanted by aloofness and inflexibility. She explained:

> *…things like, "Oh a wife is meant to do this, a wife is meant to do that, a wife is meant to be at home, a wife is meant to be looking after the husband, a wife is meant to be", you know, "All the cultural things over here are totally wrong", …so that I was locked down in the house, basically (Kim, 11, 500).*

Kirsten described the occasion that signalled her husband's change:

> *…we went out for a friend's birthday, …we'd only been married a month, and I remember (friend) going oh you know, "You only had your baby in August", I said, "Yes", he said, "Oh you're looking really well, you've lost a lot of your weight already", and Dave went, "Oh that's just the Bridget Jones knickers, you want to see how fat she is when she's not wearing the clothes that suck her in underneath", and I was kind of like, "Ouch, where did that come from?" (Kirsten, 13, 378).*

Colette noted that her husband's emotional disengagement featured frequently throughout their marriage. She recalled how he could withdraw not just affection, but communication of any form. On one of these occasions they and their first child, at the time still a baby, had been staying with his family for several weeks. She was packing their belongings for the long-haul flight home, when they had 'a little argument' (4, 326). She had been cross because he had suddenly walked away from her. She said:

> *I said, "That's it walk away", and that's <u>all</u> I said to him, and I mean if I had stood on the table stark naked, and sung 'Knees Up Mother Brown', in front of his entire family, that would have been not as embarrassing I think, than for me to disrespect him in front of his aunty and his cousin, and he wouldn't talk to me on the plane going back, the stress of that is incredible (Colette, 4, 326).*

On another occasion, in a restaurant, she had embarrassed him in front of his friends by challenging their view of him as supportive and helpful in the home.

> *I said, "Pardon, what are you talking about …about <u>him</u>?" I said, "What does he do then?" She said, "Well, you know, we've been to your house and I see him, he clears up after dinner, puts it all in the dishwasher", and I said, "That's because <u>you're</u> there, that's to make a <u>show</u>, in front of everybody, look how wonderful I am, I clear up after dinner every time", I said, "He doesn't lift a <u>finger</u> in my house, <u>I</u> do it all", I just went berserk (Colette, 4, 316-318).*

Colette stated that her husband was 'furious' at her outburst and, in response, ignored her completely for several months:

> *…because that was one of the ways we'll punish her, we won't talk to her, except to say, "Pass the salt", …if he did cook something it would be just for himself (Colette, 4, 318).*

In summing up the effectiveness of this deterrent, Colette compared it to physical violence:

It was just, ooh I just got the feeling, hhh, just so awful, um, if somebody hits you, if somebody whacks you, then, and then they, it's finished then the punishment is over and done with, but with him, it lasted for months (Colette, 4, 318).

Even when her husband had decided to restore communications, she noted that the tension was still palpable:

…but it still wasn't nice even though we'd make up, because I'd be the treading on eggshells bit, worried that I'd say the wrong thing, I'd do the wrong thing (Colette, 4, 320).

For these women, their partners' coldness and indifference had been a consistent feature of their relationships. Other participants had not experienced this withdrawal of affection until much later. Nombeko, for example, noted that her husband had been affectionate for most of the time that they had been together. As she explained:

I've heard women who say, "Oh my husband tells me I'm fat, I'm ugly", …he's absolutely never ever said those things, …most of the time he's a very loving happy person actually, when you push him, then he will turn nasty (29, 459).

For some participants, however, their partners swung between the two extremes. As Ruth commented:

I was literally walking on eggshells, I didn't know whether in the next minute he was going to come through the door screaming and, you know, pinning me up sort of close and bullying, or whether he was, "Hello my darling", …which is the absolute, you don't know where you are (Ruth, 23, 971-973).

Discreditation

Along with the withdrawal of affection, several participants spoke about the ways in which their partners' behaviour influenced how the women were perceived by other people. Most participants recalled being made to feel shame about, and take on some responsibility for, their partner's unacceptable behaviour. One of the ways that men discredited their partners was by behaving extremely badly in front of her friends and family, leading them to question her judgement in 'choosing' him as a life partner. Marcia's husband, for example, behaved perfectly well when they were with members of his own circle but had, on many occasions, embarrassed her in front of her friends.

He knew how to be a shit, at the worst times, but it would always be to show me up, and it would make me look bad, it was like, "Well he's your husband", so it's almost like I'd take the blame, and stuff being ruined, evenings being ruined, dinners being ruined, parties being ruined (Marcia, 1, 357).

Nearly all participants described having felt, on occasions, embarrassed and discredited by her partner's unacceptable behaviour in the presence of her friends and family. Four women, however, noted that their partners adopted an additional strategy. Kamala, for example, had been subjected to extreme physical and sexual violence (discussed later in the chapter), and had been 'prostituted out' by her husband. As a result, she lived in a constant state of fear, and had become withdrawn and watchful in the presence of others. She described her husband's demeanour in public as being in complete contrast to her own.

Because he always appeared to others to be calm and cheery, her disposition was cast in sharp relief. She noted:

> *You become so mummified, that's the only way I can describe it, …I never spoke to my neighbours, never ever spoke to them, he'd be out there chatting to everyone (Kamala, 11, 478).*

Marcia's first husband had maximised the contrast between his disposition and hers by driving her to hysteria whilst, at the same time, appearing calm and self-controlled. She noted that he had, more than once, tried to prevent her from leaving him. On these occasions, he was intimidating, violent and abusive toward her until she became terrified. By the time she escaped the house and sought help, she was in a highly emotional state. In one incident, she managed to reach her car and, despite his attempts to stop her, drive the short distance to her sister's house. She recalled:

> *I was terrified I was going to run him over, … and I don't know how I got there, <u>absolute</u> state I arrived on the doorstep and she was completely thrown, "What the hell's happened?", briefly told her, I was like, "He's gone mad he's really really lost it, he's just gone mad, I'm so frightened, I couldn't get out fast enough, I've had to drive like across all the gardens and everything" (Marcia, 1, 417).*

Marcia's sister, incensed at her brother-in-law for causing such distress, felt impelled to challenge his behaviour face to face. She drove to Marcia's house in order to remonstrate with him:

> *He's all mister calm, mister calm, and he said, "Oh what are you doing here", she said, "Well I've come to find out what the bloody hell's been going on", he said, "Nothing", he said, "Marcia's left, that's all, don't know why she's left", so she comes back to hers, saying, "Well he's alright, he's calm, he's not doing anything" (Marcia, 1, 417).*

Faced with his apparent composure and Marcia's 'hysterical' state, her sister was inclined to doubt her account of the incident – and, instead, began to question Marcia's mental health:

> *…and she told me I was just completely losing it (Marcia, 1, 677).*

Ruth described similar ordeals that her husband had put her through. As a result of his abuse, she had been prescribed a mild medication for postnatal depression. She noted that this was then used to discredit her:

> *…and of course, he latched on to this and said, you know, "She unstable, she's…", you know, this was playing into his hands (Ruth, 23, 250).*

Marcia and Freya both talked about their partners' discreditation of them as a strategy for gaining sympathy from other people. Freya, for example, said:

> *…if you're thinking, your ideas and behaviour whatever didn't match his then you were automatically wrong, …because his position and his thinking was correct, and by me insisting on telling him that it makes me feel bad, that I was then victimising him, and the other aspect of it is that he knew, …he was aware that if he accused <u>me</u> of being the bad one he would get sympathy from other people, the world at large, you know, "Look what I have to put up with" (Freya, 9, 390-394).*

Endrudgement

Most participants described their role within the household, relative to that of their partners. Even when women were working long hours outside the home, they were expected to take full responsibility for housework and childcare. Colette, Kamala, Marcia and Freya all referred directly to this process of endrudgement. For example:

> *It is like the person doesn't give a damn about you, well you are their servant, you are their slave, …anyway he started to deliberately destroy things so that we lived, we lived in a building site, the flat where we lived in was just, you know, he did stuff to make my life so difficult, um, ((laughs)) that, you know, after a while stepping over, picking up his socks and his underpants or any clothes seemed in my mind petty, because there was so much other mess to deal with (Colette, 4, 112).*

> *…six o'clock got up, done my cleaning, got the breakfast together, and it went on from there, come home from work clean up clean the house, and I think it just gradually just got, fell into place, he would always find faults, …if the place wasn't done to his liking, he'd get, you'd expect that beating, or if the meat was overcooked, or if it's not what he wanted for dinner (Kamala, 14, 182).*

Emotional and psychological abuse

For most participants, the withdrawal of affection, discreditation and endrudgement were accompanied by increasing levels of other forms of emotional and psychological abuse. The manifestations of these were varied but, being compared unfavourably with other women, usually close friends, was one of the ways in which perpetrators eroded their partners' positive sense of self. Colette and Marcia were often asked by their partners why they were not more like their closest female friends.

> *He often compared me to other women, particularly a friend of both of ours called Anna, ran her own business, she was the driven person not her husband, and I was often told, "Why aren't you more like Anna? Why can't you be more like Anna?" (Colette, 4, 42).*

The tactic was even more effective when used on occasions in which the friend was also present. Marcia, for example, described these occasions thus:

> *When she'd come and visit, she'd go to the bathroom or something and (he) would say that, "Why can't you be more like her?", you know, "God I wish I'd married her instead", you know, "Why can't you be decent woman like Kate is?", and then she'd come back into the room and he'd be carrying on as if nothing had just happened (Marcia, 3, 365).*

These behaviours were set against a more general backdrop of sullenness and ill-temper, non-communication, and a refusal to participate in, or allow the women to participate in, social and leisure activities. Colette, for example, described her situation thus:

> *…not being able to sit down and read a book, not being able to have friends, you know not being able to have a telephone conversation with a friend because he would be sitting on the sofa beside you with his ear to the phone (Colette, 4, 304).*

Participants also described a range of ways in which they were kept in a permanently heightened state of anxiety and watchfulness. Carmen's partner, for example, had bought a gun:

> *…and we used to sleep with it under our pillow and I hated that, I used to think this thing might just shoot me in my head one day it might go off and it was just, it was a really nerve-wracking relationship, it was horrible (Carmen, 5, 139).*

Eve's partner would suddenly, and without any warning, disappear:

> *He'd go to get a paper or go to work or whatever, and then you wouldn't see him for like two or three weeks (Eve, 6, 238).*

Kirsten had challenged her husband about his contact with another woman. He denied that he was being unfaithful, and she accused him of lying. She said:

> *…and we had a big argument about it and I found his phone and I said, "Look", I said, "She's even sending you like naked messages, I've had enough", I was like, "I'm leaving you, I'm taking both the girls", …and he smashed the windows with his fist, put his fist through two panes of glass (Kirsten, 13, 311).*

Other participants described being psychologically manipulated by their partners:

> *…and I couldn't keep up with his reasoning, …the way he presented his argument was so clever that by the end of the argument I didn't remember why the argument had started, or I truly and genuinely believed that I was mistaken in my grievance, because of the way he put it (Freya, 9, 552).*

For many of them, these 'mind games' had prevented them from leaving the relationship. Marcia's explanation was typical:

> *He'd make me feel guilty, you know, we were married and I'm supposed to be with him, and, "If you hadn't have said that, I wouldn't have done that", that's when the mind games start because you start, you start questioning what's real, you start questioning what you said, what you thought you said ((laughs, crying)) (Marcia, 3, 325).*

Women also spoke about being denied activities in which they took pleasure. For Colette, this involved the business that she ran with her husband:

> *…and I just loved my business, I loved my shop, I loved serving customers, I loved doing my display in the windows, …he gradually throughout the marriage took away things that gave me pleasure, or motivation, or an incentive to do something like for instance I'd be doing my window display, and a window display takes ages it really does, and it's an artistic expression, and you're hoping that people will go, "Wow", …he'd say I'm wasting time doing this, or, "You've spent too long on it" (Colette, 4, 128).*

One of Ruth's pleasures was singing and, when she and her husband moved home, she was keen to get involved in the local music scene. She was made welcome, and soon began to receive invitations to participate. Excited at one offer in particular, she emailed her husband. She recalled:

> *I said you know, "I've just spoken to this chap and he said would I be happy to do a recording for them, so you know, how do you feel about that", I got the most vitriolic reply back, I mean really vile language, …very nasty indeed (Ruth, 23, 182).*

Isolation

Most participants noted that, over the duration of the abusive relationship, they had become increasingly isolated from other people. They explained that their partners had achieved this by making it difficult for them to maintain links with their friends and family. Naomi, for example, recalled how hard it had been for her to spend time with her family and friends:

> *He didn't like it if I went out with my sisters, or friends, he'd get a big cobber on, so it was just like dealing with a child really, or if there was big family events like a wedding or a party he'd cause an argument before, so we'd either end up not going, but I quickly learned what would happen, I could predict what would happen, days before, run up to an event (Naomi, 16, 225-227).*

Colette's husband had made her guests feel unwelcome by being rude to them and 'creating an atmosphere' if they visited. She explained the effect that this had had on her social life:

> *…this is what he would do, he would just, gradually, friends that I had, you wouldn't want them to come back home, or he wouldn't want them to, you wouldn't want to call them, so people get pretty pissed off when, you know, they might not say it to you but you know you're going to get dropped by people because you can't socialise with them (Colette, 4, 308-312).*

Her husband has also tried to drive a wedge between her and her father:

> *He would try and sort of intimate that my dad didn't really care about his grandchildren, …"He's not that bothered", …and make out that my dad didn't really give a shit (Colette, 4, 330).*

Another way of isolating women was to uproot them. Colette, Ruth and Olivia had been persuaded by their partners to move to new homes that were long distances away from their family and friends and, for Ruth and Olivia, this was to remote rural locations. Olivia joked:

> *…and I thought we were going to be Little House on the Prairie[29], I thought he was going to be Mr Ingalls, but I'm going to be Mrs Ingalls ((both laughing)), …I'm chopping the wood, ah, idyllic life, but it didn't happen (Olivia, 17, 209).*

Surveillance, and restriction of freedom

Along with their increasing isolation from other people, participants talked about being closely monitored by their partners. Most women gave accounts of the ways in which their physical and psychological freedom had been eroded.

> *…and with him working nights he'd phone me all through the night and God help me if I didn't answer, "What are you doing?", "I'm asleep, Dave", …and then he'd get in and he'd be tired and needing sleep and it was like, "Well, put the babies down for a nap*

[29] 'Little House on the Prairie' was a 1970s American drama television series about a family living on a farm in nineteenth century Minnesota. Mr Ingalls was an honest, hard-working and compassionate man who dealt calmly and maturely with the various trials that beset him and his family.

and you come to bed as well", and I wasn't allowed to leave the bedroom, while he was sleeping, in case I was off doing things with other people (Kirsten, 13, 396).

Mobile phones were commonly used to ensure that, even when not physically present, women were permanently being monitored by, and available to, their partners. Freya's account was typical:

He was always on at me about keeping my phone switched on, you know, when my phone went out of battery because I'd forgotten to charge it and he was trying to reach me and he couldn't, he went absolutely berserk at me, he couldn't keep tabs on me, you know (Freya, 9, 570).

Other women also talked about their lack of privacy. Ruth, for example, said:

…he was allowed to have secrecy with his phone, and I wasn't, so I had to be an open book, but he didn't have to be, …he looked at my phone to see whether I'd made phone calls on the way home, and if I was five minutes late I had to explain where I'd been and, you know all of that, I didn't have any privacy, or any rights (Ruth, 25, 671).

Colette and Leonie both described not being able to speak privately on the phone at home. Leonie said:

He made it difficult for me to speak to my brothers and my sisters because when we speak on the phone we normally speak my dialect, and he said no I have to speak in English, …and I said I wouldn't do that, 'cos I'm speaking to my brothers, I have to speak in my dialect, and that caused a problem, you know, trying to make me not to be close to my brothers and my sisters and I didn't like it, … each passing day he makes me feel very unsafe and the relationship between my brothers and my sisters were being um shaky somehow because each time they call me I'm always scared to pick up the phone because I know that I have to speak in my language (Leonie, 15, 343-351).

Eve found it difficult to have conversations with her children:

…with the kids as well, you know, say that (teenage daughter) was up in her bedroom, or doing something in another room, and I'd go up and talk to her, he'd be coming up behind me, "Why are you up there?", as if we were like concocting some plan, against him (Eve, 6, 290).

Although Simone did not talk about having been monitored in this way, she noted that her partner had supplied much of the jewellery and clothing that she wore.

He used to tell me to wear the, wear the jewellery, he used to buy designer clothes for me, not with me, not take me with him and buy, he used to go out there and buy the clothes and bring them home, and um ask me to wear them, and I used to wear them, …some of them I liked, some of them I didn't, and I just used to wear it without questioning, even though sometimes I didn't want to (Simone, 27, 164).

During the relationship, she had not considered this to be a form of control, but she later began to reframe her experience. She pondered:

…so I <u>think</u>, why did I do that, I suppose I must have been scared of him a bit, even though he hadn't <u>done</u> anything, he hadn't hit me, he hadn't shouted at me, he hadn't threatened me, but maybe the way, I don't know if it's his body language or his tone (Simone, 27, 164-168).

Dispossession and financial abuse

Financial abuse featured in most participants' accounts of their relationships but, once again, this was achieved in varying ways. They described their abusers' tactics for restricting their ability to 'own' anything that they might value, and for taking claim of financial assets that they had brought to the relationship. Naomi, for example, noted the disparity in terms of the cars that she and her husband drove:

> *He had a nice car and I had like the cheap car to run, and normally if we'd go out we'd take his car but, if I went out without him, he wouldn't let me take the nice car, I'd have to just take my rubbish one (Naomi, 16, 241).*

Freya described having been viewed by her husband as 'his property', without any rights to possessions of her own. In order to illustrate the extent to which she had internalised these messages, she described the day that she had left him. She had waited until he had gone to work and, with the help of her mother and sisters, hurriedly packed. She recalled:

> *…and we had a bit of a laugh because one of the stupid things that I'd brought was sanitary towels ((laughs)), from the bathroom, and you know why, because in my panicked thinking I thought, "Oh well, he doesn't need that, I can take that with me", …that's how conditioned my thinking was, …I can't take anything that he's going to need, it's a nice example to illustrate how my thinking was conditioned to him, that at the moment of panic when you don't have time for rational thought, that's the first thing that comes to mind ((laughing)) (Freya, 9, 687).*

Some women described being economically inactive due to childcare responsibilities and, thus, financially dependent on their partners. In these cases, the men made it difficult for them to budget. When he was working, Eve's partner would often use his wages to fund his drug habit rather than provide for his family – and his regular disappearances for weeks at a time made it impossible for him to hold down a job. This meant that she and their children were often left without money for food and other essentials. She noted that even their possessions were not safe; if he had no money, he would steal, and sell, anything of value.

> *…he stole off my daughter, constantly, she couldn't have anything, you know, …she had a little kiddies' safe, and she only had about ten, fifteen pounds in it, and he took that, but he didn't like take (the safe), he actually broke into it, and left like the broken, why would you do that? (Eve, 6, 250).*
>
> *My daughter bought a Dreamcast[30], …little second hand one, with her birthday money, and she had it two days, and he took it, I bought a travel cot to go and see my sister, and literally I used it once, and that had gone (Eve, 6, 278).*

Eve had found this permanently heightened state of awareness extremely stressful.

> *…you know even to go to the toilet, is he going to still be sitting here when I come down, have I got money in my purse, have I got anything around, I wouldn't have anything of any value, you know, even choosing stuff to buy my kids for Christmas and thinking if it's any value I wouldn't have bought it, you know (Eve, 6, 278).*

[30] A home video game console.

Kamala was working outside the family home, but her husband tightly controlled the household finances and provided her with a minimal budget for food shopping:

> *You've got to survive on a budget of forty pound a month, make sure everyone's got food, it's ridiculous (Kamala, 14, 526).*

She noted that, at the time, this was just about possible, and explained how she was able to produce family meals on what she was given:

> *…mostly with Asian food you can buy in bulk, and vegetables you know they always have them where they've kind of gone off, but there's nothing wrong with them, you can still cook them (Kamala, 14, 528).*

Leonie was forced to rely on her family for basic essentials:

> *I was getting financial support from my parents back home, and it's not very good, it's kind of a taboo, like when you get married your parents shouldn't be supporting you financially, so I didn't really feel good about it, I had support from my brothers as well, you know, 'cos he wouldn't um give me money to buy food, so what I did was I got some milk for my daughter then from (the local hospital) (Leonie, 15, 111-113).*

Other participants spoke about their partners spending large amounts of money that the women had brought with them to the relationship. Ruth, for example, had half of the proceeds from the sale of the house that she had bought with her previous partner. She recalled the way her husband had behaved:

> *…he got very nasty with (ex-partner), about the money coming through (from the sale of the house), he was <u>desperate</u> for this money, …it turns out that he was heavily in debt, to the tune of several thousand (Ruth, 23, 141).*

Marcia had been disabled as a result of mistakes that were made during a routine medical procedure. She had received a significant sum of money in compensation but, rather than set it aside to pay for her care and support needs, her husband had insisted that they spend it immediately.

> *When the money (from medical negligence case) came through he said, "We need to buy our own house", suddenly it's all coming from him, "I need you to buy this to make a go of things", so all my money went on buying a house, that needed doing up (Marcia, 1, 615-617).*

Nombeko, a psychiatric nurse on a manager's salary, was keenly aware that her financial independence had at least protected her from this form of abuse. She reflected on what this had meant for her, and for other abused women:

> *…and I always think about women who are in a relationship where they have to rely <u>completely</u> on this man, for money and everything, because one thing my husband knew was, I could survive without him, I didn't need him financially, I actually for most of our life together I earned <u>more</u> money than he did, um so if you are this woman who has absolutely nothing and you <u>rely</u> on this man to look after you, I think it should be the most difficult thing, because at least I could say to myself, "Actually, I could get out of here if I really want to", but if you have no such choices it must be even worse I think (Nombeko, 28, 133).*

Physical and sexual abuse

Most participants mentioned being subjected to physical abuse. Olivia, for example, recalled an occasion when she had popped out to the local shop with her baby daughter. Her partner had arrived home while they were out:

> *I gets in the door, boom, hit the floor… "Where were you?", I said, "I had no cigarettes" ..."I don't believe you", bom bom bom bom, …and my poor (daughter) was screaming (Olivia, 17, 265).*

Simone's partner's ex-wife, also a victim of his violence, had reported him to the police for his post-separation assault of her. He had wanted to intimidate her into withdrawing the allegation. Because he also wished to avoid arrest, he had asked Simone to assault her on his behalf. She had refused, and described his response:

> *…and then he said, "You'd better go and beat her up otherwise I'll…", did he say, "I'll kick you down"? I can't remember but he threatened physical violence if I didn't beat her up, so I said, "Well, you'd better kick me down then because I'm not going to do it", and then he punched me on my jaw, …I remember flying across the room literally my feet off the floor (Simone, 27, 201-205).*

Naomi noted that her husband had been less violent when she was pregnant with their first child. When she was carrying their second child, however, his violence escalated:

> *…my second pregnancy was probably the time that he was most physical with me in the <u>whole</u> marriage, one time he throttled me, threw dinner plates (Naomi, 16, 253).*

She went on to describe what was, for her, the most harrowing aspect of these assaults:

> *…the difference this time was it was in front of my son so it wasn't him doing it privately he was doing it in front of my son, who, who was quite traumatised by it all but each time he'd do it, he would make, pin me down or <u>make</u> me go into a corner and not move, so that I couldn't tend to my son who would only have been between eighteen months and two at the time he was screaming, because to me that was more torture, not being able to go and comfort him (16, 253).*

She continued:

> *…then when he knew I wouldn't move he'd grab Joseph and shove him in the pushchair and just go out, and I didn't know if he was going to take him in front of a bus, go to the canal and drop him in, because my feeling was this man was a psycho, and at any point he would just do the ultimate thing that he knew to punish me (16, 254).*

Kamala's relationship with her children had also been affected by the abuse to which she had been subjected. She said:

> *…and the kids become abusive towards you, because that's all they know, …they'd be like if I tell them, "OK, go and clean your room", it would be, "Why? No, I don't have to", and the verbal or the abusive language would start with them too (Kamala, 14, 179).*

By the time we met, Kamala's children had reached adulthood, and she had become a grandmother. She noted the difficulty she had, as a result of the abuse, in feeling or expressing emotion toward her children:

It's really hard, (my grandson) is the only person who gets my emotion really, he's the one who brings it out in me, he's the one constantly running up for hugs, but he's the only one (Kamala, 14, 304-308).

Of her children, she added:

…they didn't know any, I'd never hold it against them like, (my son) would say, "Oh I'm so sorry I said those things to you", I, "Yeah", but it's, "What could you have done?" (Kamala, 14, 312).

Ruth's husband had also been physically violent toward her, though, at the time, his behaviour was not so easily defined by her as abuse. On many occasions, he had shoved her or forced her against a wall whilst shouting close to her ear, but he had always stopped short of hitting her. She described an incident that had occurred shortly after the birth of their daughter, a phase in which he was 'being loving and nice'. She had had a difficult labour and delivery, and had received multiple stitches following an episiotomy[31]. Whilst they were out for a walk with some friends, she had affectionately patted his bottom as he went past her. In response, he had grabbed the back of her underwear and given it a sharp upward tug. She said, 'I thought I was going to pass out, it was so painful'. When her friends noticed that she was crying, and asked what had happened, her husband passed the incident off as 'just a laugh'. He claimed that she was 'over-reacting' and said, "Oh she's being hysterical, as usual" (Ruth, 23, 266).

Kamala, Marcia, Naomi and Nombeko all mentioned that sexual abuse had featured in their relationships. For Kamala, as mentioned previously, this had included being raped by her husband's friends while he watched. Whilst Marcia did not refer to sexual abuse explicitly, noting only that, 'God, being in bed wasn't safe' (3, 295), Kamala, Naomi and Nombeko spoke about it more directly:

…but the worst bit was when he'd get the other men, into the house, and when they would just do what they want to me, …he was prostituting me out to his friends, and then, I just gave up fighting, ...I couldn't fight him anymore, just hoping it would hurry up (Kamala, 14, 192-196).

I would say I was a good wife in that I would render the due, but if he wanted it and I said, "No", he'd still take it (Naomi, 16, 241).

Kamala talked about the impact of her husband's abuse on her sense of self:

…and it's just, he's robbed he's totally it really robs you of who you are, you know what is normal what is not normal, was it normal for him to allow other men to sleep with me? Well yeah it must have been, but it's not (Kamala, 14, 486).

Nombeko's husband had knowingly infected her with HIV. She noted:

…and that's the reason I was so angry with the HIV thing as well because I spoke to him about it, if I found out later and we had not had the conversation, I would have said, "Well, it happens, maybe he didn't know", but it's the fact that I sat him down and said, "This is the issue", and if he had not given me those reassurances I probably would have said to him, "We're going to have to get tested before we even have sexual contact" (Nombeko, 28, 348).

[31] Episiotomy: the perineum (area between the vagina and anus) is cut during childbirth to increase the size of the vaginal opening.

Toward the end of their relationship, he had also raped her. She explained:

> *I had already set up a different room for him, and he went into my room, he was watching TV because there was a TV set, "Oh I need to watch a programme", I then went in to bed, and I said to him, "Please, I really don't want to fall asleep with you still in this room". He said, "No, no, no, I'm just going to watch this TV programme and go", and then he started the, "Oh you are my wife, really I don't know what this is all about, not touching me and all that", and up to a point where he had sexual intercourse with me (Nombeko, 29, 223).*

Their children were asleep nearby and, not wishing to distress them, she had felt unable to put up much resistance. When she reported the incident to the police, she felt that it had not been taken seriously. She continued:

> *…but they said, "Oh it will be difficult to take it through a prosecution because the fact that you are married, he wasn't an intruder in the house, you didn't scream out", and I remember saying to the police, "If he was a stranger, and he had just come into my room and did that to me, I would have screamed out, but this was the father of my children, and my children were sleeping in the next room, how am I going to scream out, you know, can you think of how much damage that would have done to the kids, for kids to hear me saying their father is raping me?" But, unfortunately, the law doesn't look at it that way (Nombeko, 29, 223).*

Ruth's experiences of sexual abuse were somewhat different in that, rather than forcing her to have sex, her husband had rationed it to humiliate her. She commented:

> *…and also, there was no sex involved, because you know, "If you're good, we'll have a little cuddle tonight", can you imagine it, you know, you're just newly married, so everything was sort of dangling this carrot (Ruth, 23, 121).*

At times, her husband had insisted on placing a bolster down the middle of the bed, 'so that he didn't have to touch me' (23, 139) and had forced her to cover her face with a cloth during sex; he had told her this was so that he could fantasise about penetrating someone else. Ruth recalled:

> *…not only did I feel utterly humiliated, but he made all sorts of derogatory remarks about my body, about my performance in bed, about the fact that he didn't respect me (Ruth, 23, 121).*

Minimisation, denial, and blaming women for the abuse

Initially, when challenged about their behaviour, typically, the men apologised. As time went on, however, they increasingly engaged in minimisation and denial. For example, Nombeko had confronted her husband about his infidelity:

> *…he will say, "Well it's just, it's a bit of silly behaviour, I just got myself carried away and did it" (Nombeko, 29, 459).*

When Colette accused her husband of being extremely rude to one of her friends, he feigned ignorance:

"Was I? Oh, really sorry, I didn't mean to be that way. Was I? Oh sorry", so you kind of, you know it's like because they're in such denial, you're kind of like, I must be mad, maybe it was me (Colette, 4, 376-378).

The men then began to blame the women for the abuse. Kirsten's account was typical of many participants' experiences:

I just remember that, that look on, and I've never seen it since, like when he used to kick off and he'd say he's sorry it never felt like it was genuine, that was the only time that I could actually say he did genuinely seem upset, like he's been a puppy and that I'd scolded him and that, and then, as it goes on, and it gets worse and worse and more incidents happen, then it starts getting violent, when they start saying, "Sorry", it's very very short-lived, and then it becomes um, you know, "Well, if you hadn't have done this", and, "If you hadn't have said that", and, "If you hadn't have behaved in that way, I wouldn't have had to" (Kirsten, 13, 319-323).

Using fear to prevent her from leaving

Once women had started to think about exiting the relationship, they began to weigh up the risks that they faced. In addition to the more practical concerns about how they would manage financially, for example, they stated very real concerns for their own, and their children's safety. Kim's husband had tried to kill her and, in the process, had assaulted their children:

…he was just going crazy, and I was just really scared, I just could feel, I just thought like not one of us was safe, (husband) then swung (eight-year-old) around grabbed the phone out of his hand, swung him round by the other arm, and sent him flying into the radiator, …punched (eleven-year-old) in the side of her head, …while she was on the ground, he kicked her (Kim, 11, 114).

Leonie's husband had kicked their baby's Moses basket across the room, while she was in it, and had threatened to kill her:

I know whatever he says he's capable of doing it, because he has once held my throat, he said, "I will kill you, you will die" (Leonie, 15, 689).

Ruth was aware that her husband had threatened to kill his previous fiancée, and her previous boyfriend. Freya's husband had threatened suicide:

…taking his child away from him, I thought he wouldn't be able to handle it, he would commit suicide (Freya, 9, 687).

Several participants talked about their fear that, if they left, their partner would kill their children and then commit suicide. Marcia, for example, said:

I mean how many awful stories do we hear on the news about parents who are separated and the next thing you know is the father's killed the kids and then killed himself, yeah, I mean I was very aware of that, you know, (he) had always threatened suicide (Marcia, 2, 355-359).

Nombeko's husband had not been alone in playing on this fear. She explained:

The threats he normally used to make were, "Well, if we can't be together as a family, we might as well all die", and I used to ask him how he suggests we're going to all die, and his answer is always, "Well, you don't know what will happen if someone loses their mind", so that's all he will say, and because I'm a psychiatric nurse I've worked for many years with people with personality disorders, and sometimes I worry about that threat, because I think he is somebody who wants control, and he wanted control he wanted control of me and control of our family, and at the moment he is feeling he has no control, and sometimes I worry about whether there will be a time when he thinks, "Well, I might as well lose it all, you know, in terms of I kill them all, and I kill myself" (Nombeko, 23, 223).

Women's journeys from commitment to separation

As discussed in Chapter 3, none of the men referred to in this study had shown any signs of being abusive during the courtship period. Most participants noted that, only once they had made a longer-term commitment to the relationship did their partners' behaviour begin to change. For some, this change was immediate; Marcia, Kamala, Ruth, Kirsten and Kim talked about their partners' sudden switch, around time of their marriage, from being loving and attentive to bullying, unreasonable and cruel. For others, the change had been more subtle and over a more extended period of time. Carmen, Nombeko and Simone, for example, had been unaware at the time of the ways in which their freedoms were being eroded. They had not considered their partners to be abusive until much later in the relationship. In each case, this had been at the point the women began to challenge their behaviour.

During the course of the interviews, participants reflected on how they had, whilst still in the relationship, attempted to make sense of their experiences. Whilst most were clear about the range of ways in which they had been abused, Carmen's, Olivia's and Simone's perceptions of 'abuse' in their relationships were linked exclusively to acts of physical violence. For example, Carmen noted that, as their relationship progressed, her partner's attitude had begun to change and that he was 'quick to get into an argument' (5, 49). For her, however, the abuse was limited to one incident, at home, in which her partner had argued with her sister, Jenny. Eventually, Jenny had walked out. Carmen explained:

…so for him to pick an argument with her, I just got really wound up by it, …and it really upset me that she was leaving, …we started to argue, …and I remember he came up to me and grabbed me by the neck and pushed me down on the bed, now, at this time I was: how far gone, five months pregnant, …pushed me back on the bed, and my reaction was just to fight, and I fought and I fought, and I just remember grabbing at his face and all these scratches on his face (Carmen, 5, 49).

Olivia had described her relationship with another of her partners, Greg. She had noted that he was controlling, but had considered this a price worth paying:

…he had a lovely big three-bedroomed house, with only him in it, … got with him, oh that was shit, but I just got my head down and just did whatever he wanted me to do really, because after all that I couldn't be bothered I just, you know I had my baby I had to look after (Olivia, 17, 235).

Later in our conversation, she talked about first time he had hit her:

> *...and then he picked up his hand, (baby) is in my arms, like this, and he just got his fist like that and bang on my head, …so that was the start of Greg abusing me then (Olivia, 22, 290).*

In the absence of physical violence, Nombeko, too, had struggled to understand her experiences as abusive. She commented:

> *I was never physically abused, never, and I think that's why for years again I struggled, with whether I'm being abused or not, because you hear of the stories of the men who hit women and all that, or who are excessively controlling, my husband was never excessively controlling, I was quite independent really in what I did and planned and all that, but he was controlling how our relationship was going to go, because he expected me to remain his wife, remain loyal, but he somehow had the freedom to do whatever he wanted to do (Nombeko, 29, 113).*

Because they had not previously considered their partners to have been abusive, when they began having concerns about the changes in their behaviour, they struggled to explain those changes. As Marcia commented:

> *…so in a way I couldn't understand, …why did he go out with me at all, you know? What was his goal, because all he did was just <u>vile</u> when we were married (Marcia, 3, 109).*

Women moved from initial incomprehension to exploring possible reasons. Carmen's partner had never been physically violent toward her, until he hit her whilst she was pregnant with their baby. As a result, she had miscarried, and ended their relationship. She wondered if his abuse was deliberate, and asked me:

> *Can people abuse people without knowing? Does it have to be a conscious thing, do you know what I mean? (Carmen, 5, 278).*

Simone, who had also separated from her partner the first time he physically assaulted her, was similarly unsure whether his behaviour was intentional. Her thinking at the time was:

> *He appears not to have understood what's happened (Simone, 27, 223).*

Olivia suggested that one of her partners, due to his alcohol and mental health problems, had not understood what he was doing. She described an incident in which Matthew had woken her up in the middle of the night, and made a two-inch laceration to her hand. She said:

> *…and he sat on the edge of the bed and he, this wasn't an erratic thing where he came in and went ((makes slashing noise)) like that, …I knew he was in one of those bloody weird moods, I just thought, "Don't fucking <u>move</u>, Olivia, because that's a Stanley knife, and that could like go right through your hand or something", so I didn't move and he just did it all very fine (Olivia, 17, 644).*

Some time after she had left the relationship, Matthew died of a drug overdose. In reflecting on the reasons for his abuse of her, she commented:

> *…poor Matthew he had problems Jo ((crying)), he wasn't well, anyway, I feel bad for Matthew because he didn't get the fucking help he needed (Olivia, 18, 288).*

Kamala, Marcia, and Ruth had initially put their partners' behaviour down to stress caused by extraneous factors. Their husbands' jobs, and major events, were thought to have

triggered the abuse. Ruth, for example, considered the possibility that her husband had been having 'some sort of breakdown' brought on by, earlier in their relationship, the stress of organising their wedding and, later, the pressure of his job.

> *…he is very stressed and, you know, tired because there's been a, end of term, lot going on at school (23, 119).*

Her initial thought had been:

> *I've got to be patient, I think, perhaps he's depressed, perhaps there's a reason, and we'll sort it out (23, 121).*

Later, however, her thinking had shifted. She said:

> *I knew I'd made a pretty awful mistake, but I felt I've married this man, I've made my vows, I'm going to stick with him, he obviously needs help, and I'm going to see, do my damnedest to <u>get</u> him that help (Ruth, 23, 141).*

For half of the women, some form of problematic substance use, either alcohol or drugs, featured in their descriptions of their abusers' behaviour. Two women had experienced more than one abusive relationship, and it had not featured in all of these. Thus, fewer than half of the men that participants talked about were using drugs or alcohol to what the women considered to be problematic levels.

Although Nombeko's husband had tried to tell her that alcohol was responsible for his unacceptable behaviour, she had not been persuaded. She commented:

> *…he really is not a person who drinks so much that he loses his mind, he <u>doesn't</u>, but that's what he's blaming it on at that moment, "It's drink, oh I think I was drinking too much", …it's not true (Nombeko, 29, 175).*

Simone's partner was using crack cocaine. Although she did not see herself as abused until, later on in their relationship, he assaulted her, she noted its effect on his temperament. She described her efforts, on occasions, to avoid an argument with him:

> *...it was really difficult sometimes, because he would be paranoid, and I had to be very careful how I operate around him when he's paranoid, sometimes he'll accuse me of things, like, I'll give you an example, the council planted some (saplings) outside, I could see them through the living room window, ..so he'll be looking out the window and then he'll say, "Come here, come here, there's somebody behind that tree", and the tree's too slim for somebody to be standing behind it, but if I said to him, "There's nobody there", he'll say, "Of course there is, are you trying to say I'm mad?" So as not to kind of cause any friction or anything like that I would pretend, "Oh yeah, I can see that person" (Simone, 27, 142-148).*

Only Olivia, who had lived with more than one abusive man, considered drugs or alcohol to be responsible for one of partners' behaviour. As mentioned previously, in explaining Matthew's reasons for cutting her hand with a Stanley knife, she said: 'he was drunk, didn't know what he was doing' (17, 644).

Several participants talked about the extent to which they had internalised their partners' insistence that they were to blame for the abuse. For example, Ruth and Marcia said:

…at the same time feeling very strongly that I was doing something wrong, I had to be doing something wrong' cos everything was turned round to be my fault, he's blameless, nothing's ever his fault (Ruth, 23, 141).

…when you've been with an abusive partner you're questioning what you've done and who you are the whole time, …because even listening to friends who'd say, "Look, you don't deserve that", there's still part of you that thinks, "Well, I must have done though, because I got it, that's what I got and you didn't" (Marcia, 3, 477-479).

Freya added:

…and also, because other women had told me that you have to feed the marriage, and of course I thought, "Well", you know, "I'm not doing enough because it's not working, I can't be doing enough because it's not working" (Freya, 8, 358).

As with the other participants, Freya had gradually begun to question her responsibility:

…so I did more, and it was working even less, now I realise that it takes two people, and that thought was there, and that was um torturing me, because I, you know the thought came up, "Well why isn't he doing anything?", and when I tried, dared to speak it, there was retribution (Freya, 8, 358).

Simone was aware that her partner had hospitalized his ex-wife on several occasions. Despite this, until she herself was physically assaulted by him, she had not considered herself to be at risk. Although she did not feel that she was to blame for his assault, she had believed that his ex-wife had provoked the abuse. She explained:

I didn't think that he would do it to me, …the way I rationalised it was that the reason why he hit her is because she'd done something to bring it on herself, she pressed certain buttons that she knew that would get that reaction, but that wouldn't happen to me because I'm a different person, and our dynamics were different (Simone, 27, 122).

Not every participant had been exposed to all of the behaviours discussed in this chapter. However, most women had endured many of them, and spoke about the impact that they had had on their sense of self. Throughout the interviews, they noted the ways in which their identities as, for example, wives, mothers and home-makers had been suppressed or, over time, eroded by their partners.

As mentioned earlier, Marcia talked about her feelings of humiliation when taunted by her husband, on their honeymoon, with his infidelity (1, 51) and, later in their relationship, being made to 'look bad' (1, 357) by his behaviour in front of her friends and family. Colette spoke about her identity as a businesswoman, and how it had been eroded by her husband (4, 128). In Naomi's reference to the 'torture' (16, 253) of not being able to comfort her son, and Kamala's talk of being abused by her own children, they articulate the attacks on their maternal identities.

Participants noted the ways in which their understandings of 'home' had been subverted by their partners. Olivia, who had anticipated her home being 'Little House on the Prairie' (17, 209), had been quickly disappointed. For Kim, who described being 'locked down in the house' (11, 500) within weeks of her marriage, her home had become a prison. Kamala felt denied the regular social interactions with other people, and reported that she 'never spoke to her neighbours' (11, 478). In Colette's 'not being able to sit down and read a book' (4,

304), she indicated that her sense of home as a place in which one could relax had been taken away from her. For her, Kamala, Marcia and Freya, their endrudgement had further reinforced this deprivation. The lack of privacy to make phone calls to family and friends that she, Leonie and Ruth described represent further examples of the disjuncture between participants' expectations of 'home' and the reality that, for them, this became.

Ruth summed up her husband's strategies for undermining her sense of self, and their impact, thus:

> *…but they're fairly standard aren't they, um, you know the cutting off of finances, the using of my finances, in a very subtle way, the fact that he was allowed to have secrecy with his phone, and I wasn't, so I had to be an open book, but he didn't have to be, the cutting off of previous friends because they were friends with my ex, the cutting off from my family, um the gradual move further and further into (rural location) so that we didn't even have neighbours, …and if I was five minutes late I had to explain where I'd been and, you know, all of that complete, I didn't have any privacy, or any rights, and then taking over the things that I was good at, so I was good at music and he wanted to learn music, so he wanted to sort of dilute it I suppose, so that sort of eroded my identity really (Ruth, 25, 671).*

Colette and Kamala also talked about what had been taken from them:

> *I've over the past few years been of the state of mind of where what you know if I get my knickers on the right way round, and I get my kids to school, fantastic (Colette, 4, 44).*

> *…that was the first time I cried, when my mum had been dead, what, near enough eight years? Nine years? But he, you get robbed, you get robbed of your, like people can laugh and turn around and say "It's common sense", you don't have any common sense, you get robbed of it, …it's just, you are so brainwashed (Kamala, 268-270).*

When we met, several years after she had exited her relationship, Marcia was still struggling with her sense of identity. She said:

> *'cos I'd started the degree, …and so the first year was social science so we studied a lot about identity, it was the first time I'd really sat down and considered it, and I thought, "Who am I? Really, who the hell am I? What am I?" It's all been lost (Marcia, 3, 497).*

Interpretation of results

The forms of abuse to which participants were subjected are consistent with the existing literature discussed in Chapter 1. Withdrawal of affection, discreditation, psychological and emotional abuse, isolation from other people, infidelity, exerting financial control, threats and intimidation, acts of violence, rape and sexual assault have all been noted as common tactics of abuse (see, for example, Bostock et al. 2009; Burman and Chantler 2005; Crossman et al. 2016; Flanagan et al. 2014; McCarthy et al. 2017; Stark 2015). However, organising my data in this way necessarily involves a level of decontextualization of participants' experiences; discussing each form of abuse, rather than each participant, in turn can mask the fact that most women were experiencing many or all of these forms of abuse simultaneously. The importance of understanding DVA as a temporally indeterminate *pattern* of abusive behaviours (Bufacchi and Gilson 2016; Dobash and Dobash 1998; Johnson

and Ferraro 2000; Pence and Paymar 1993) has been argued by feminists for many years. Rather than a series of isolated incidents, it is the web of various forms of power and control used by the perpetrator (Kelly and Westmarland 2016) that entraps his partner in the abusive relationship (Kirkwood 1993). I consider that, using a combination of intimidation, isolation, surveillance, and rigid rule enforcement, the partners of participants in this study acted purposively to dominate and control them. I return to this proposition, and discuss my argument in more detail, later in the chapter. Common to many of these behaviours was their apparent unpredictability; none of the women referred to the build-up, and inevitable explosion, of violence characterised by the 'cycle of abuse' (Walker 2009) referred to in Chapter 1.

Several participants mentioned that their partners, when behaving in ways that were harmful to them, did not seem to realise what they were doing. However, none of the men had given cause for concern until the women had committed to the relationship, which suggests that the men understood the difference between what was acceptable and unacceptable, and were capable of prosocial behaviour. Even after the women had developed a level of trust in them, many of the men switched between behaving well and being abusive – depending on who was present to witness their behaviour. This inconsistency left women confused, and meant that their energy was channelled into attempting to make sense of the behaviour, rather than challenging it.

Gaslighting[32] is a form of psychological abuse in which information is twisted, falsified or selectively omitted to favour the abuser, with the intent of making victims doubt their own memory, perception, and sanity. Several participants in my study referred to the 'mind games' played by their partners, and noted that they had, at times, doubted their own sanity as a result. Other research has also found abused women questioning their own memory and understanding of events (see, for example, Abramson 2014; Dorpat 2006; Dorpat 1994; Gass and Nichols 1988). Avni (1991) even reports that women persistently accused of infidelity eventually began to wonder if they had been unfaithful without being aware of it.

Initially, women were bewildered by the change in their partner's behaviour and attitude toward them. During this stage, they attempted to find a rational explanation for the turn, and tried to avoid escalating the situation further while they 'diagnosed' the problem. In attempting to make sense of their experiences, all participants drew on individualistic explanations for the abuse. Their partners' stress levels, problematic substance use, and/or mental ill health were factors considered by women, and several had contemplated the extent to which they themselves were to blame. These ways of conceptualising experiences are common in women who have exited abusive relationships (Abrahams 2007; Abrahams 2010; Allen 2011) and, later on in the chapter, I discuss why that might be the case.

Paula Wilcox (2008) notes the paradoxical nature of knowledge about domestic violence. She suggests that, whilst public awareness of DVA as a phenomenon has increased significantly, individual women tend to view it as something that only happens to other people, and draw on stereotypes to process its meaning. For women who come to experience DVA in their own intimate relationships, this reality comes as a 'huge shock,

[32] The term 'Gaslighting' owes its origin to the 1938 play, Gas Light. In the story, Jack Manningham attempts to convince his wife, Bella, and others that she is insane. He surreptitiously manipulates elements of their environment and, when she points them out, he insists that she is mistaken or delusional. The title refers to the dimming of the gas lights in the house during the periods when Jack is searching the attic, by gaslight, for the hidden jewels of a murdered woman. Bella notices the dimming lights, but Jack insists that she imagined it.

rocking personal feelings of physical security as well as her hopes and aspirations about her marriage or partnership' (Wilcox 2008, p81). Most of the participants in my study spoke about their shock when they realised that the person they had previously considered their 'ideal man' was, in fact, manipulating them and their social milieux in order to fulfil his own needs.

For some participants, their conceptions of DVA were linked solely to particular forms of physical violence. Nombeko and Ruth, for example, had struggled for a long time to view their own relationship as abusive because their experience did not fit with those of the stereotypical victim of DVA, of 'battered women' with bruising, black eyes and broken bones. Nombeko's husband had knowingly infected her with HIV. Ruth's husband had often aggressively pushed and shoved her and, on one occasion, had caused her excruciating pain by tugging her clothing against her episiotomy wound. Although their partners had physically harmed them, and had used other strategies of control, they had never beaten them. Similarly, Carmen, Olivia and Simone only regarded their relationships to be abusive from the point at which they were hit. Simone, for example, had initially told me that her relationship had not been abusive prior to her partner's physical assault of her. It was only when we were discussing men who attempt to control what their partners wear that she began to reframe his prior behaviour – and she continued to believe that 'paranoia' caused by his drug use, rather than a deliberate attempt to provoke a disagreement, prompted his bizarre assertions. As a way of conceptualising abuse this is somewhat limiting, because it overlooks the various forms of physical assault that fall outside of those associated with stereotypical 'victims'. It also renders invisible the grooming and controlling behaviours that precede the physical violence.

Ultimately, all the participants in my study came to recognise that they were being abused, and made the decision to exit the relationship. At the time, however, they attempted to make sense of individual incidents; it was only much later that they reframed these incidents as part of a pattern of abuse. Had participants been familiar with Catherine Ashcraft's (2000) concept of domestic control, and the new definition of domestic abuse (Gov.UK 2013), which includes coercive and controlling behaviours, they may have reached an earlier understanding of their experiences as oppression. In addition to the more overt forms of DVA, such as physical and sexual abuse, the other behaviours to which they were subjected can be identified as methods with which to maintain and reinforce relational inequality. All of these aspects of their partners' conduct can be plotted on to Ashcraft's matrix, and thus made available for scrutiny. Their partners' withdrawal of affection can be understood as passive and visible 'domestic neglect', i.e. duties and responsibilities that the men had an obligation to provide. The men's discreditation of their partners, and the psychological and emotional abuse to which they subjected them, consist of active behaviours; the more visible forms constitute 'domestic domination', whilst the less visible strategies can be framed as 'domestic distortion'. Surveillance, dispossession, and using fear to control the women are active and visible 'domestic domination'. Minimisation, denial and victim-blame constitute 'domestic distortion'. Ashcraft's matrix has the potential to help shift individuals' understanding of DVA as a clear pattern of behaviours, within the context of an intimate relationship, designed to oppress one's partner. The new statutory definition of domestic abuse reinforces this understanding and, together with the Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence Act (2017), should ensure that women have better access to support, advice and justice.

The compound effect on participants of their partners' abuse had been profound, and most were still struggling with its legacy long after having exited the relationship. For example, discreditation was a powerful way of reducing women's sense of self-worth and spoiling their relationships with members of their support networks. Most participants described having been deliberately embarrassed by their partners' poor behaviour in the presence of their family and friends, and talked about the feelings of shame that this evoked. Evan Stark (2012b) notes this as a common strategy adopted by abusers to isolate their partners from their support networks. As Rachel Pain (2012) suggests in her study of 'Everyday Terrorism', humiliation and shame at being abused are powerful emotions. In order to avoid shame, a response to being viewed with contempt by others, people tend to distance themselves from social relationships (Goffman 1963). Whilst Colette, for example, talked about her friends withdrawing from her as her husband's behaviour worsened, it is entirely possible that she, too, engaged in withdrawal as a strategy for managing the stigma of being married to someone so unpleasant. Other participants described their partners deliberately behaving calmly and cheerily in the presence of others in order to discredit them. For her neighbours, Kamala's watchful and guarded demeanour would have stood in stark contrast to her husband's apparent gregariousness. This would have shaped her perception at the time, that they were friendly with her husband and thus not available to her as a form of support. For Marcia's sister, her episodes of apparent hysteria, in response to her husband's terrorising, made it increasingly easy to see Marcia as the 'problem' and doubt her claims of abuse. By driving the women to a state of chronic fear or hysteria, and then contrasting her demeanour with their own calm self-control, the men effectively stage-managed their partners' self-discreditation. Whether it was the men's behaviour or the women's that was concerning to others, many of the people who might have provided participants with support at an earlier stage tended, over time, to withdraw. This, coupled with the women's shame, served to increase their isolation and reduce their opportunities for escape.

Women's isolation was further achieved by their partners actively making it difficult to maintain links with other people. Sulking if she were planning to spend time with family and/or friends, making her guests feel uncomfortable and unwelcome if they visited, and deliberately undermining her close relationships were effective strategies for cutting her off from her support networks. In isolating her from others, he was able to filter the information that she received, and thus keep her ignorant of anything that might threaten his control. This dismantling of her relationships, and its accompanying disparagement of her friends and family, over time prevents her from holding views that challenge his own. The self is a result of the social process whereby we learn to see ourselves as others see us (Cooley 1983). If the 'others' providing this reflected identity are reduced to one person, then it increases the likelihood that theirs is the judgement we will internalise and, in turn, project. Assuming some level of responsibility for the abuse adds to women's isolation; self-blame effectively silences them, and makes it less likely that they will seek help (Towns and Adams 2016). Once isolated from views in which their partners' behaviour might have been problematised, the abuse became normalised (Evans and Feder 2016), and fear was used to prevent women from leaving (Pain 2012).

Although the effect of abuse on the mother-child relationship was only referred to by two participants, their narratives support the notion that, for women with children, this can be significant and long-lasting. Thiara and Humphreys (2015), in their study of 45 mothers who had exited an abusive relationship, note the ways in which the perpetrator continued to cast

a shadow over the lives of women and children, even when not physically present. Preventing the mother from displaying affection toward her children, forcing her to prioritise his needs at the expense of theirs, deliberately turning the children against her, and encouraging them to abuse her, were common tactics described by the women in their study. Both Kamala and Naomi spoke in emotional terms about their husband's deliberate undermining of their relationship with their children. For Naomi, the 'torture' of not being able to comfort her son when she was being assaulted had not significantly damaged their relationship in the longer term. For Kamala, however, whose husband had 'weaponised' their children (Stark 2015) so that they, too, were abusing her, the harm had been enduring. His 'absent presence' (Thiara and Humphreys 2015) was a legacy of the relationship, and the only person with whom she had been able to bond since that time was her grandson.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, domestic murder and/or suicide as a response to women's attempts to exit an abusive relationship is not uncommon. Half of the participants in my study noted this as a real fear when they contemplated leaving their partners. Various descriptions and explanations have been offered for domestic murder/suicide as a response to women's attempts to exit an abusive relationship. Some writers suggest that 'family annihilation' is not always about revenge but a man's desire to protect his family from the traumatic aftermath of a sudden loss (Deith 2012). Richard Gelles uses the term 'anomic suicide', and argues that it is prompted by 'a sudden disruption to what one thought would be true about one's life and family' (Auchter 2010). He suggests that this difficult disruption, mixed with an 'overenmeshment' in one's family, underlies such cases. According to Gelles, overenmeshment is a state in which perpetrators:

> *…either view their family members as possessions that they control or [they] don't see any boundaries between their identity, their wife and their children (Auchter 2010, p10-11).*

Thus, according to Gelles, these are suicides of the entire family in which the anomic, overly enmeshed individual cannot bear to leave the pain behind and so takes his partner and children with him. Both Levin's and Gelles' arguments are predicated on such men perceiving an inalienable right to make decisions about, and for, their families. Marilyn Gregory, a British criminologist who studied 20 cases of domestic murder-suicide, provides a feminist interpretation. She argues that it is actually about possession and control; a case of 'if I can't have you, no one else will' (Gregory 2011; Gregory and Milroy 2010). Either way, the frequency with which such cases are reported suggests that participants' fears are well-founded. Threats of this nature, whether implicit or explicit, evoke a pervasive sense of dread with which women live; they serve to keep them in the abusive relationship and, if they do manage to leave, continue to haunt them long after they have left.

Thus far, the spotlight has focussed on the behaviours of individual men, and women's experiences and understandings of those behaviours. A feminist poststructuralist approach allows for consideration of the wider sociocultural context in which the behaviours are performed. In the next section, I shorten the focal length of the beam and increase the area illuminated.

Feminist Poststructuralism: cultural scaffolding of DVA

As noted in the previous chapter, a range of cultural narratives and popular discourses provide the milieu in which women experience and make sense of their relationships. Using a feminist poststructuralist lens allows an examination of the gendered nature of these ways of thinking and speaking about the world, the constraints on what it is possible to think and say, and the ways in which discourses can be used to subjugate women (Gavey 1993).

As their partner's behaviour shifted from loving and attentive to abusive, participants in my study drew on dominant discourses to account for the change. Several began by questioning their own culpability. Although their thinking shifted over time, and they eventually came to hold their partners responsible for the abuse, they had initially considered that they were either doing something wrong or simply not doing enough to make the relationship work. In so doing, they drew on traditional heterosexual romance narratives in which male dominance and female deference and dependence are normalised, and women are expected to maintain their intimate relationships by prioritising their male partners' needs. The romantic love discourse is dominant in shaping women's sense of responsibility for the health of their relationship and, therefore, their partner's violence (Chung 2007; Towns and Adams 2000). These discourses have been shown to influence women's sense-making of their own experiences of DVA (Chung 2007; Towns and Adams 2000; Towns and Adams 2016; Towns and Scott 2013; Wood 2001). Within this discourse, jealousy is interpreted as a sign of love (Power et al. 2006), and abusive episodes as temporary aberrations. This, together with the notion that 'love conquers all', serves to silence women's talk of abuse and bind them in relationships with their abusers (Towns and Adams 2000).

Simone, for example, drew on the romantic narrative of being showered with gifts as a demonstration of love and affection. Graciously accepting her partner's purchases of clothing and jewellery, at the time she did not construct his behaviour as a way of controlling her appearance. In accounting for his abuse of his ex-partner, she drew on the dominant discourse of victim-blame; her predecessor had provoked him into beating her, and Simone would not be so foolish. In this way, she was able to maintain a positive self-image, and unable to conceive of herself as at risk.

Nearly half of the women in my study drew on the dominant discourse of physical violence as the only legitimised form of abuse; unless or until they were beaten, they had struggled to understand their experiences as DVA. When Simone's partner did assault her, she used a narrative in which men are constructed as hapless, helpless, and reliant on women as a civilising influence (Jackson 2002; Mills and Lingard 2010; Reed 1999), and considered that he had not understood what he had done.

Leonie and Naomi drew on traditional notions of marriage, in which patriarchal authority over, and responsibility for, women is transferred from father to husband. Leonie's embarrassment at her continuing financial dependence on her parents and brothers, and shame at her husband's failure to provide for her and their child, were informed by this discourse. In Naomi's reference to herself as 'a good wife' rendering herself sexually to her husband, she uses the language of sex as a duty (Szreter and Fisher 2010) that is demanded of married women. When describing the infrequent occasions on which she denied him sexual access, she did not use the more emancipated language of 'rape' or sexual assault'; implicit in what she was saying was that he had asserted his patriarchal authority, and taken what was 'rightfully his'. Ruth's husband, by contrast, had rationed their sexual activity and

indicated feelings of disgust for her. The same discourse of married men's entitlement to sex with their wives, and that of the 'male sex drive' in which men are constructed as always desiring sex, would undoubtedly have heightened Ruth's feelings of rejection and humiliation. Whilst in the relationship, Ruth drew on dominant discourses of heterosexual love to make sense of her husband's behaviour and seek a solution. Using the romance narrative, she constructed his abuse as a series of discrete aberrations caused by stress and/or depression. In referencing her marriage vows, she drew on Hollway's (Henriques et al. 1998) have/hold discourse; she was optimistic that, with her help and her love, they would overcome their difficulties.

Of course, the men to whom participants referred also drew on these discourses. Most participants mentioned their partners' expectations with regard to their relative roles within the relationship. Kim's husband's lectures, for example, on the role and behaviour appropriate for 'a wife', and his restriction of her freedom, draw on traditional notions of marriage and the gender roles assigned to men and women. Similarly, in the romantic love narrative, discord in the relationship ends with the couple 'kissing and making up'. Men's initial apologies, pleas for forgiveness, and promises not to repeat the transgression all draw on this discourse; they also act as compelling rhetorical devices for persuading partners to remain silent about their abuse and remain in the relationship.

Men also drew on binary discourses of male rationality and emotional self-control, and female irrationality and instability (Fischer and Manstead 2000) to discredit their female partners. Marcia's husband drove her to flee their house in a state of hysteria, and then starkly contrasted her demeanour with his own performance in order to undermine her credibility. Ruth's husband, in seizing on her treatment for depression, drew on this same discourse.

Looking back on their experiences, most participants were clear that, whilst in the relationship, their partners were systematically stripping them of their freedom (Stark 2009). At the time, however, they drew on dominant discourses to account for their behaviour. Within the context of dyadic heterosexual relationships, these dominant discourses, and the practices of which they are constituted, serve to obfuscate any distinction between 'normal' and 'abusive' behaviour. As such, they operate as the cultural scaffolding (Gavey 2005) of DVA. As I have demonstrated, in the absence of discourses with which to construct their partner's behaviour as anything other than 'normal' or a 'temporary aberration/affliction', women tended to draw on dominant romantic narratives. Within this space, they perceived their partners' behaviour toward them to be in response to either the women's own shortcomings in maintaining the relationship or other external stressors, rather than a strategy for oppression. Without access to a discourse that allowed them to think about those behaviours as intentional, and deliberately designed to achieve and maintain complete control, they struggled to hold their partners responsible for the abuse. In the next section, using Dark Triad (Paulhus and Williams 2002) as an heuristic device, I provide an alternative interpretation of the actions of the perpetrators.

Interpreting perpetrators' behaviour: Dark Triad

As has been detailed in Chapter 1, and as I argue here, the aim of the perpetrator is the complete control of his partner's behaviour (Johnson 2008) and her total obedience. He seeks to accomplish this by isolating her from others and, at the same time, eroding her

sense of self. The effect of her isolation is that she gradually becomes disconnected from any forms of support, increasing her dependence on her abuser, and has minimal access to views other than his own. This provides the optimum conditions for 'mortification of self' (Goffman 1968), the process in which he gradually dismantles her former identities in order to render her docile and submissive.

Abusive households as 'Total Institutions'

In the late 1950s, Erving Goffman proposed that establishments such as closed psychiatric institutions, prisons, concentration camps and the military can be seen as 'total institutions'. According to Goffman (1968), total institutions are places in which, for inmates, all three spheres of life (work, rest and leisure) occur. They are closed communities; inmates are confined to the institution, and physical barriers, such as high walls and locked doors, are used to ensure separation between those within the institution and the outside world. Inmates exist in the close company of large numbers of other inmates, all of whom are subject to the same conditions and treatment. Their activities are decided and controlled by a single authority, and managed by a small number of staff.

Because inmates are cut off from the outside world, the staff are the only source of information to which they have access. Staff, on the other hand, are able to move freely between the institution and the outside world. A wide range of sources of information are available to them, and they are in a position to control that which is shared with inmates. Thus, inmates' lives come under the complete control of the institution in which staff feel superior and powerful, whilst inmates feel inferior and weak.

Total institutions are encompassing and totalising – to the degree that, for inmates, they become 'the world'. Admission to a total institution catalyses the process of 'mortification' – what Goffman theorised as a sustained attack on the autonomy of the individual. Goffman notes that:

> *On the outside (of a total institution) the individual can hold objects of self-feeling – such as his (sic) body, his immediate actions, his thoughts, and some possessions – clear of contact with alien and contaminating things (Goffman 1968, p31-32).*

In total institutions, however, these 'territories of the self' (Goffman 1972) are infringed; constant surveillance and regular violations mean that the usual lines of demarcation between the individual and her/his environment are invaded. The inmate:

> *…begins a series of debasements, degradations, humiliations and profanations of the self. His self is systematically, if often unintentionally, mortified (Goffman 1968, p24).*

Inmates' personal clothing and possessions are confiscated, and they are issued an ID number. They have no physical or psychological privacy; they endure strip searches and are constantly under surveillance, and their life history and any personal correspondence is laid bare. The humiliation of inmates by staff is routine, as are 'obedience tests' and will-breaking contests. Any resistance to authority is punished, and inmates live in permanent fear for their personal safety.

The culture within the homes of participants bore many similar characteristics to 'total institutions'. Using a feminist poststructuralist lens, I interpret the behaviours they described as a process of mortification. Women experienced the same degrading and humiliating treatments as Goffman's 'inmates', and I suggest that, for their abusers, they

were a deliberate, Machiavellian strategy for oppression. Having behaved impeccably in the early stages, they had persuaded their partners to commit to a longer-term relationship. At this point, their behaviour had changed from seeming loving, attentive and respectful, to distant and abusive. Drawing on notions of male privilege and power, a dominant discourse within heteropatriarchy that maps onto Paulhus' (2014) construct of Narcissism, the men slowly stripped their partners' connections to the outside world in an attempt to dismantle and remove any trace of individual identity.

Affective affirmation, the words and gestures used to show one's partner that they are special, noticed and cared for, is an essential aspect of positive intimate relationships (Birditt et al. 2012). Negative punishment, the behaviourist technique in which something good or desirable is removed, is an effective way of reducing the reoccurrence of undesired behaviour (Skinner 1963). Participants in this study found their partners' withdrawal of affection extremely distressing, and were immediately prompted to attempt to restore the relationship. Colette, in particular, referred to her fear of provoking further episodes of non-communication as 'treading on eggshells' (4, 320). For their abusers, the strategy was a powerful way of achieving women's compliance. Emotional and psychological abuse formed part of this manipulation. Blaming them for the abuse led women to question their own sanity, and experience a state of 'doublethink' (Pain 2012). The sustained attacks on women's sense of self, and undermining of their memories of events through 'abusive misunderstandings' (McCrea 2012), act as a form of coercive persuasion (Ofshe 2000), or 'brainwashing'. They served to make women doubt themselves and increase the men's control over them.

Most participants were constantly under surveillance; minute behaviour was observed, assessed and, if their partners deemed it necessary, sanctioned. Evan Stark (2006; 2009) notes this 'microsurveillance' and 'microregulation' as a form of coercive control. All of the activities in which inmates of total institutions engage are planned for them; they do not get to determine how their time is spent (Goffman 1968). For most of the participants in my study, if they wished to do something outside of the established regime of activities, they needed to seek permission from their abuser. This served to remind them of, and reinforce, the balance of power within the relationship. In seeking assent, they were instantly positioned as submissive and he, as the authority figure, was in a position to humiliate her by refusing permission.

Participants were not sharing their living space with large numbers of other, similarly controlled inmates. However, this structural difference makes the abusive household even more totalitarian than the institutions to which Goffman refers, and actually contributes to the mortification of the self. Noga Avni (1991) suggests that the ratio of inmates to staff affords individuals a certain level of protection; there is a less than even chance that one is being observed at any point in time, and there is always the possibility of collective action against one's oppressors. In abusive households, the one-to-one ratio of abuser to victim renders her far more visible, and without allies.

By imposing a coercive, web-like regime (Morris 2009) on their partners and children, made up of a wide array of forms of abuse, the men entrapped their victims in the relationship. For women, the combined impact of these behaviours was to keep them in a permanent state of tension and hypervigilance. The unpredictability of such conditions has been shown to induce permanent and pervasive fear, leading to debility, dependency and dread (Mowrer 1939). Fear was a key barrier to leaving their abusers and, as Rachel Pain (2012)

notes, this fear is entirely rational and justified. She argues that the control that results from keeping women in a state of chronic fear is the way in which domestic abuse 'works'.

In the absence of alternative discourses, DVA is understood as a series of 'incidents', rather than a pattern of abuse. Applying individualistic explanations places responsibility for the abuse on either its victims or on stressors from outside of the relationship. This shifts responsibility away from the perpetrator, and prevents women from considering these behaviours as possible warning signs of greater manipulation to come. Using the model of Dark Triad as a device for describing and interpreting DVA, it becomes possible to view perpetrators differently. Rather than hapless, helpless, flawed individuals in need of love, understanding and guidance, they become Narcissistic men who use Machiavellian strategies to achieve their desire for control, with a psychopathological lack of consideration for their victims, or the harm done to them as a result of their abuse. As such, they say and do whatever they consider to be necessary. They do not position their partners as people, with their own needs and desires, but as objects to be manipulated for their own ends. Their apologies are not expressions of remorse, or indicators of empathy, but simply another instrumental strategy for ensuring that their partners continue to meet their needs by remaining in the relationship.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed and interpreted participants' experiences of living with abuse. Their narratives are consistent with previous research in this field, though much of the traditional literature presents a somewhat decontextualized picture of DVA. By shortening the length of the spotlight beam, I have illuminated the wider context in which the perpetrator's behaviour can be understood. From a feminist poststructuralist perspective, individual incidents are reframed as part of a broader regime of oppression; the abusive household is rendered visible, and thus available for scrutiny. Within the wider cultural scaffolding of heteropatriarchy, which creates the power relations and dominant discourses in which abusive behaviours can flourish, 'home' takes the form of a total institution. The mortification of women's previous identities, as described using the model of Dark Triad, entraps them in the relationship with their abuser.

All of the participants in my study managed to exit the relationship with their abuser. However, physically separating from him rarely ended the oppression. In the next chapter, I discuss women's experiences of post-separation abuse.

Chapter 5 Remote Control: Post-Separation Abuse

Here, I present the analysis of the third of my themes, 'Post-Separation Abuse'. In this chapter, I discuss the stage in participants' journeys from the point at which they had separated from their partners. The data items included in this analysis were coded to: discrediting her to others; emotional abuse; exhaustion; fear; financial abuse; interventions by others; meaning of 'home'; perceptions of abuse; physical abuse; resisting abuse; sexual abuse; verbal abuse; victim-blaming; and perpetrator's manipulation of other people. I begin by setting out the more blatant ways in which perpetrators continued to abuse their partners once they had separated from them, before moving on to their more insidious strategies for attempting to regain control. Drawing on the available literature, I then interpret these behaviours from a feminist poststructuralist perspective and, in the process, offer an enriched understanding of perpetrators' behaviour.

Thematic analysis

Only two of the women in my study did not mention post-separation abuse. In our first meeting, Naomi had talked about her experiences of abuse up until the point at which she made the decision to leave her husband. We had initially planned to meet up again so that she could continue her story but, at her request, our second meeting did not go ahead. For that reason, it is not possible to say whether or not she experienced post-separation abuse. Carmen had no further contact with her partner once they had separated so, for her, the abuse ceased at this point. The remaining twelve participants all disclosed that they had been abused after they had separated from their partners. In most cases, the men had moved out of the family home but continued to return to the property; in others, the women, all of whom had children, had moved out.

Intimidation and assault

Some of the strategies used by ex-partners involved blatant demonstrations of power and strength. Most participants described unannounced visits from their ex-partners, often in breach of court orders, that led to them and their children being intimidated and assaulted. For example, Leonie said:

> *…but even when he left the house he was still coming at midnight… but I wouldn't open the door he said, "I know you're with a man there, I will kill you if you don't open the door" (Leonie, 15, 115).*

In most of these accounts, women described the men breaking and entering, or causing criminal damage to, their homes.

> *…because I'd locked up and everything, he'd like <u>smash</u> his way into the house, …and I'd get all the threats and stuff like that (Eve, 6, 302).*
>
> *…he barged the door, banged and banged, …he was kicking the window trying to break it down and come in, and the kids were witnessing that (Nombeko, 29, 441).*

Nombeko explained that she and her ex-husband jointly owned their home. She felt sure that a sense of entitlement, with regard to the property, was fuelling his intimidation; once

their finances were settled, and she was in a position to buy her own home, she thought she would be better protected from his harassment. She commented:

> *…even if I phone the police, he will say to the police, "Well, I own part of the house, so I have a right to come in there" and the police will probably say, "Well, yeah you have no right to chuck him out", so he's doing it at the moment because he knows, …there's nothing I can do about it, whereas if I was in a new house where he is no longer part of it, if I close that door he can't kick my door, …because if I call the police, the police will remove him from there, so he is using this at the moment as, "Well, you can't do anything about this, call the police if you want", and he will say that, "Call the police", …and he can't do that if I'm in my own home, where he has no claim (Nombeko, 29, 439-441).*

In addition to these more naked displays of anger, most women had experienced constant visits, telephone calls, text messages and emails. Initially, they were cajoling; when these failed to persuade them to return to the relationship, they became abusive and threatening. Marcia recalled her experience of leaving her first husband. At the time, her mother was terminally ill. She said:

> *He rang morning noon and night, …and I couldn't not take the calls I had to take the calls 'cos my mum was so ill, …ten occasions it would be, "I love you, let's get back" and of course the tenth one would be, "Oh God you're", then it would be really nasty and vindictive (Marcia, 3, 427).*

Even though Kirsten's ex-husband had begun a new relationship with one of his work colleagues, he continued to harass her. She described an incident in which he had arrived, unannounced, at her home:

> *…trying to tell me that was my last chance to take him back before he was going to get serious with her, …and I went, "Congrats, have a good future with Sarah, bye bye", …I slammed the door in his face, and that's when he kicked it off the hinges (Kirsten, 13, 562).*

Discrediting her to family and friends

In Chapter 4, I presented data on the ways in which perpetrators shamed and defamed their partners. These behaviours did not desist on separation. Most participants stated that their ex-partners had lied in order to discredit them and garner sympathy from family and friends. The following examples were typical:

> *…but then he started going around telling a load of bullshit, that he came and caught me in bed with (another man) (Olivia, 15, 350).*

> *…so he was telling (my sister) stories that I'd been the abusive one, and that I'd been lying to her all these years, and that I wasn't allowing the children to go and see him, it was such crap, I couldn't believe (Marcia, 3, 91).*

> *…this is the person that puts on their Facebook, "I love my sons, I miss my sons, and my ex doesn't let me see my youngest baby, I've only seen him twice since he was born", but he was offered twice a week (at a contact centre) and I fought for him to keep that, it was the local authority who said, "No, Kirsten, because he's not turning up, and it's a room that another family could be using" (Kirsten, 13, 464).*

After what she experienced as a particularly violent and terrifying incident, in which he had tried to kill her, Kim's husband had been removed from their home by the police; a court order was put in place to prevent him from approaching her, their children, or the house. Kim described his reaction:

> *Then he turned nasty, and started making up rumours about me, saying, basically to anybody that would listen, you know like his friends or my friends, I was a prostitute, I was a junkie, um I'd slept with all of his friends, some of my children were not his own, he even phoned up social services and told them that I was a junkie and a prostitute (Kim, 9, 422).*

Ruth had also been vilified by her ex-husband. He had told both sets of family and friends that she was mentally unstable, and that she was preventing him from seeing their daughter. She noted that, because there had been no signs of his physical violence, she had struggled to persuade people of the truth:

> *People just do not believe you, particularly if the other half is charming, plausible, pillar of society (Ruth, 23, 218).*

She returned to this theme later in our conversation:

> *It's interesting just talking to you, I'm realising things that I've never really thought about, …I feel a little bit of a fake, a little bit guilty, a little bit like I'm sort of abused-lite, if you see what I mean, l, i, t, e, …because there are times when I just think, it was so horrendous that all I want to do is grab his mum by her coat collars and just say, "Listen, you listen to me, and understand exactly what your son is" …it's that frustration of not being able to stand up with a megaphone and say, "He may seem really charming, but actually this guy's a total (…)[33]", and to think that people, 'cos I moved away from the area, may have this perception of me, it's just so desperately unfair, I want to expose him (Ruth, 25, 231-243).*

Financial abuse

Most participants gave accounts of the ways in which their ex-partners restricted their access to money. Kirsten's ex-husband, for example, resigned from his job and was, therefore, not in a position to pay maintenance for her and their children. She commented:

> *I've lost so much weight since having my baby my clothes don't even fit, but I can't afford to go out and get new clothes, …I've got to make sure I've got heating, and things like that, if he runs out of gas and he can't put his heating on, he can layer up, but for a baby it's not the same, …it makes me so angry (Kirsten, 13, 614-616).*

Marcia's second husband, and father of her two children, died shortly after they had separated. He had kept the money from the sale of the family home, and changed his will just before dying. Under the new terms, he had made no provision for her, or for maintenance for their children. The sole beneficiary of his new will was a woman with whom he had begun a relationship only weeks before his death. When we met, Marcia had already spent tens of thousands of pounds in legal fees, fighting for her and her children's share of the sale of their home and challenging her ex-husband's estate. Because of her uncertain financial situation, which had been exacerbated by a redundancy that had

[33] Empty brackets, (…), denotes unclear speech that could not be transcribed.

rendered her unemployed for several weeks, she had been unable to secure a mortgage. She and her children were living in rented accommodation. Marcia commented:

> *…so that security that I had behind me that it's alright, I know I can get a mortgage, and I've always paid the mortgage, so it's going to be OK, went out the window, overnight (Marcia, 2, 836).*

Colette had also left her marriage with very little in the way of financial security, and expressed bitterness about the post-separation disparity between her own and her ex-husband's financial circumstances:

> *…because this was my business, I'd worked for nineteen years building this, working hard, …I had to walk out of my business, to get divorced I knew I had to, …he's got a business with the shop, he's got the flat above the shop so he's got the freehold, …I'm in a flat with a (…) years' tenancy, and he's also got a little flat round the corner that he rents out, so he's got his pension sorted out (Colette, 4, 36).*

Later in our conversation, she explained how he had achieved this. Whilst they had been living together, her then husband had asked her to sign papers for what she had thought to be a consolidation of their various business and property loans. Once they had separated, she had consulted a solicitor for independent legal advice. At this point, she discovered:

> *…the actual mortgage was in my name, but the actual paperwork, it wasn't…, I realised I'd signed away the title of both to him (Colette, 4, 290).*

As a result of her ex-husband's actions, Colette and her children had struggled to manage on her income, and had been reliant on her family for financial support:

> *My dad has done his best, I mean, for a while he was giving me, you know, bless him, a hundred pounds a month to kind of help me financially (Colette, 4, 272).*

Marcia noted the impact that her financially straitened circumstances had had on her ability to form a new relationship:

> *…but I'm the one who can't maintain a normal relationship with anyone else, 'cos this crap is too much, I've met some lovely guys, and they say, "Oh God, this is a nightmare", …the fact that the children are not provided for in any shape or form, you know, you meet other divorced guys, they've got kids as well, so they've already got other families that they provide for, most of them actually have bought their ex-wives houses ((laughing)) and pay for everything, oh no, not me, quite the opposite, everybody run a mile from (Marcia, 3, 593).*

Stalking and harassment

Nearly all participants noted that they had been stalked by their ex-partners. Kim's ex-husband had installed spyware on her computer, and had thus gained access to her passwords. He had removed a considerable sum of money from her bank account, and was able to track her use of the computer. When we met, some months later, she joked that the family still had the computer, but it was now only used by her children for doing their homework (11, 630).

Kamala stated that her ex-husband, who had been imprisoned for his violence toward her, had continued to pursue her long after they had separated. She commented:

…then it was just like he started going more and more loopy, he'd gone to prison, come out, …and then you're constantly running, you're constantly playing a chasing game (Kamala, 14, 430).

She had moved home several times to get away from him and, eventually, had had to leave the area entirely. When we met, her children had grown up and left home, she was living many miles away from her friends, family and Indian community, but still did not feel entirely safe from him.

…where could they send me, Birmingham? Asian community, too many people know me. Leicester? Asian community, too many people know. Where could they have sent me, apart from a desert island? (Kamala, 14, 692).

Simone had also had to leave the area to escape her ex-partner's abuse. She had been friends with one of his nieces, who had expressed concern for her safety:

…and I remember the niece more or less telling me it's in my interests, that he's not going to leave me alone, based on how he's been in the past with the ex-wife and stuff like that, because he was still beating her up after all these years, and I just thought I don't want to be that person, and the only way that I can avoid being that person is to just move right away from the area (Simone, 27, 256).

Leonie and her young daughter, Gracie, had also moved home to avoid her ex-husband's intimidation and abuse. When we met, she had part-time contracts with two different employers, and was energetically seeking full-time employment. She had registered, and was in regular contact, with several specialist employment agencies. For a while, she had managed to keep her address a secret from him but this had not stopped him from stalking her:

He didn't know where I was living, so he managed to trace my daughter's school …and I just saw someone, waiting for me at the gate (Leonie, 15, 161).

Eventually, he had discovered her new address. She described one occasion on which he had, unbeknown to her, waited outside in his car for her to leave the property, and then followed her into town. When she parked in a multi-storey car park, he blocked her in. She recalled:

… and he parked in front of me, he came out he was screaming, calling me all sort of names, and he was saying, "Gracie, come here", you know Gracie was scared because of the way he came out, he was like, I don't know how to describe it, like someone who was coming to kill, you know, Gracie was really scared and she was running you know behind me, grabbing my clothes (Leonie, 15, 181).

Leonie had reported the incident to the police, and to her solicitor:

…and my lawyer wrote to him, the police gave him a caution, but I think the caution wasn't enough, so he was just sending me emails, calling me bitch, calling me different names (Leonie, 15, 181).

Leonie had again reported her ex-husband's abuse to the police. She was told that there was not much that they could do:

…because they said it wasn't physical, …and they told me to change my email, and change my phone (Leonie, 15, 193).

Kirsten's ex-husband had also used electronic forms of communication to harass and intimidate her. For example, he had used his new partner's work email address to send her malicious emails:

> *I'm getting abusive emails from (husband's employer), from this supposed girl, actually it was him using her email account at work, and signing in as her and emailing me abusive stuff (Kirsten, 13, 474).*

He had also breached the terms of a court order by stalking her on Facebook:

> *…he tried adding me on Facebook at Christmas and I phoned the police and said, "Look my injunction says no contact at all, other than via a solicitor, and he sent me a message on Facebook, and friend requested me" (Kirsten, 13, 532).*

The police officer had explained that, for the first breach of an injunction, 'he'll just get a slap on the wrist and bailed tonight' (13, 534). He suggested that they present her ex-husband with, and make him sign for, a 'harassment letter'. Kirsten explained:

> *…so they went round there to give him that, and he signed for it, um and apparently they do that so that they can't then turn around and say I didn't know that my behaviour was causing this person distress, because they've signed for it and they're told what the instances are that caused me problems (Kirsten, 13, 534).*

She continued:

> *…and actually, at the minute we've had no kick off, since then, apart from the bad-mouthing me at court, and screaming and shouting at me, we've had <u>nothing</u>, which actually worries me even more when it goes quiet like this, 'cos I think the longest period we ever had last year was a period of ten weeks where I didn't hear from him, and then it kicked off (Kirsten, 13, 534).*

Kirsten's concerns later proved to be well-founded. Shortly after we had met, her ex-husband had broken into her home and assaulted her.

Abusing justice, child contact and child protection systems

Of the twelve women who described post-separation abuse, all but one had had children with their abuser. In these cases, the men manipulated the justice, child contact and child protection systems to continue their abuse. Participants gave accounts of their partners making frivolous applications for child residency, challenges to court orders and false reports to agencies.

Kirsten's ex-husband had told the Family Court that she had 'harassed him so badly at work' (13, 474) that she had caused him to lose his job. She said:

> *We called his manager as a witness for a half day hearing, and the manager said, "No, he said that he was leaving because he wanted to focus on the children, and by working nights he wasn't making it to his arrangements with the children". He'd voluntarily walked out of that job, yet he still said in the statement that I forced him out of it by harassing him (Kirsten, 13, 528).*

Ruth described several incidents in which her ex-husband, Gerald, had created situations that he subsequently lied about. On one of these occasions, Ruth and her new partner, Jack,

had met Gerald in a car park to deliver Ruth and Gerald's daughter, Molly, for a weekend visit. As they were driving away, Gerald accused Jack of denting his car. Ruth explained:

> *…and we weren't even sure that we'd made contact with Gerald's bumper, but Gerald made a big thing of it and took Molly to hospital, got witnesses, said that Molly had extreme whiplash and so did he, so much so that he couldn't work, the car was undriveable, blah blah blah (Ruth, 25, 473).*

The next working day, Ruth asked a friend to photograph Gerald's car in his employer's car park; this proved that he was at work, and that the car was undamaged. Ruth, who was in legal dispute with Gerald about custody of, and access to, their daughter, then reflected on what had motivated him to behave in this way. She said:

> *…but doing all this to provoke Jack, and hoping that Jack would bash him, and then he would say, "He's not responsible enough to be looking after my daughter, therefore I need more contact with her, and he is not to see my daughter", you can just see it, can't you? (Ruth, 25, 477).*

Freya had tried to leave her husband on many occasions. She had no family or close friends in the UK and, each time, he had used threats and coercion to force her to return. Eventually, when their child was just over a year old, she had waited until he had gone to work and, with the help of her mother and sisters, hurriedly packed. They had filled a car with her personal possessions, and fled to her mother's house in mainland Europe. Her husband responded by filing a missing persons' report with his local police station:

> *…he instigated proceedings against me, I had to come back to England after a month, I effectively was ordered by the courts, to come back to England, tried my best in (European mainland) with solicitors and all that to be allowed to stay, but I wasn't, the judge told me I'd have to go back, he effectively said my son would be taken back regardless, and I could choose whether I would go with him or not (Freya, 7, 919)*

Freya had returned to the UK, and entered a women's refuge. On her return, she had been forced to lodge her son's passport with her ex-husband's solicitor and, for many years, he blocked every attempt to take her son to visit her family. Because she considered him too young to be separated from her, this effectively prevented her from leaving the country. She reflected on this period:

> *I would have had my family around me so that would have made it easier, but yeah, I felt very much in exile, …I was just functioning, I was just ticking over (Freya, 8, 38).*

Because of Nombeko's concerns that, if he were alone with them, her ex-husband might harm their children (see Chapter 4), she had arranged that child contact take place at her home. Her ex-husband was exploiting this arrangement:

> *…he still doesn't accept that it's no longer his home, so he will come and he will over-stretch the time he stays there, I've been trying to say to him, I don't mind you coming three times a week, but three hours maximum, but he will over-stretch the time, and I've seen a solicitor, we wrote a letter to him to say, "Please can you stick to the time we agreed" but he's not, at the moment, …because he still tells himself in the back of his mind, that it's his home too and he has a <u>right</u> to be there (Nombeko, 29, 391).*

Most of the women expressed intense fear that their ex-partners would harm their children. They spoke of their anxiety, during contact visits, and the way in which these fears were exploited by their ex-partners. Leonie, for example, described one such occasion:

> *…and I said, "When are you bringing Gracie back?" He said, "Two o'clock". He didn't come back two o'clock, I tried to call him on the phone and the phone was switched off, three o'clock I tried to call him it was switched off, four o'clock, five o'clock, six o'clock, I was beginning to get scared, and I just took my phone to call the police, and I just heard a knock on the door, I didn't find it funny (Leonie, 15, 181).*

Gracie had also been distressed by her father's behaviour. Leonie recalled the conversation that she had had with her daughter:

> *…she said, "I was telling him I want to go home that mummy's alone", and he said, "Don't worry, I'll take you home, don't worry, I'll take you home" (Leonie, 15, 209).*

She added:

> *…and I'm really scared because I don't think I want him to even have shared custody, 'cos I feel he might hurt her, in order to get back at me (Leonie, 15, 209).*

Like Leonie, Ruth continued to worry about her own daughter's safety during visits to her father, Gerald, but felt powerless to protect her. On one occasion, when Molly was a toddler, she had stayed with her father and his new wife for a few days. When Ruth collected her, Molly greeted her mother by putting her tongue into her mouth. Once they were home, Ruth gently questioned her for more information and was told that she had learned the 'kiss' from her father. She explained:

> *…and then I said, "Oh", you know, "What does he do?" and she said, "Oh, first your elbow, and then", and then she actually pointed to her chin and then her cheek, and then she said, "And next your nose", and then she got me by my ears, and she kissed me again, and put her tongue in my mouth again (Ruth, 24, 309).*

Ruth contacted her local children's services department, and a female social worker visited Molly at home:

> *…she said that our threshold is too high and we can't get anything concrete (Ruth, 24, 299).*

After a further incident shortly afterwards, in which Molly had surprised her mother by using sexually explicit language and, when questioned about this, had disclosed more of her father's troubling behaviour, Ruth became even more concerned that her daughter might be being groomed for sexual abuse. On this occasion, she contacted the police. Again, Molly was interviewed, this time by a male police officer who was accompanied by a female social worker. Ruth stated:

> *…and I was very clear, I didn't say, "Does daddy do this?" I said, "Who does this?" And I wasn't cross with her at all, so the information was volunteered from her, that's the other thing that policeman said, "You're feeding her", I said, "No I'm not, I'm absolutely not" (Ruth, 24, 279).*

The police officer remained convinced that Ruth had coached her daughter, and no further action was taken. Ruth continued:

…but how can you prove, you know, she wouldn't say it ((laughs)), the one thing I do know is that, the grandmother's told me that (Gerald's wife) isn't allowed to dress Molly, or wash her, bath her, dress her, change her, anything, it's all Gerald, and I've said this, you know, but it doesn't add up to anything ((laughs)), it does in my head (Ruth, 24, 309-315).

Reflecting on her ex-husband's motive in these incidents, she commented:

…and I think that that was what he implied when he said, "I'll punish you for the rest of your life", that's what I read into it, …and what better way to hurt me (Ruth, 24, 33-35).

Ruth also spoke of being manipulated by her ex-husband when arranging to collect and return their daughter. For example, he had often insisted they meet in remote places, such as unlit car parks and closed petrol stations. Until her solicitor was able to get a court order, in which Gerald 'had to agree to meet somewhere that was well lit, where there were lots of people around' (23, 314), he had used these occasions to continue to harangue her:

…well he had the whip hand when it came to collection time, he'd more or less say, "Well, you want the baby, you come to where I say" (Ruth, 23, 320).

Even with the court order in place, he still made sure that Ruth did most of the travelling:

…he would have me driving all the way over to (town) which was round the corner from him but a long way from me, so my whole evening would go, and I would get Molly back late and, it's things like that that don't sound very much, but collectively… (Ruth, 23, 320).

Ruth reflected that her husband had been extremely cruel to her throughout their marriage, and had taken every opportunity to continue his abuse of her post-separation. Despite many incidents, independently witnessed by a range of professionals (including members of the judiciary), she felt that the family justice system had regularly undermined her attempts to protect herself and their child.

I think the law needs to catch up, I mean my solicitor is fully on board, he understands, but the legal system is way behind the understanding of the police, and I've heard that from the police as well, they said, "We get it, we see psychological abuse we know that it can be equal to, or even sometimes worse than, physical violence", and they said convincing the law that that's the case or the legal system, judicial system that that's the case is their biggest hurdle, and there's such a chasm between the two (Ruth, 20, 721-725).

Ruth's ex-husband was challenging her through the family court for custody of their child. She had been discouraged, by her solicitor, from mentioning the abuse on the basis that this might affect her credibility with the judge. She told me that she had spent many thousands of pounds in fees for legal advice and representation during this process. When we last spoke, she expected that it would continue for some time to come. Her ex-husband had obstructed all attempts to resolve the matter by refusing to provide necessary information when called upon to do so, by making baseless accusations about her being unfit to care for their child, and by harrying her solicitor with telephone calls and letters – knowing that she would be paying by the hour for his responses.

Kirsten's ex-husband had tried the patience of the family court judge, who was attempting to accommodate his expressed desire to maintain a relationship with his children. Because of his previous assaults on Kirsten, an order was made that time spent with his children should take place at a contact centre. Kirsten described an occasion in court when her ex-husband had been asked about his failure to keep these appointments:

> *…he turned round initially and said to the judge, "I hadn't been going because I work eleven at night to seven in the morning, I'm too tired to go to contact ten to eleven, it's too dangerous for me to drive, I'm so tired by then" (Kirsten, 13, 460).*

The judge asked about his usual working hours, and invited him to pick a convenient day for contact:

> *…and the judge said, "Well if you finish work the early hours of Monday morning, and you're off Monday night and Tuesday night, what about the Monday, or is that because you're finishing Monday morning?" He said, "No I can't do that." He said, "Well, what about Tuesday morning?" "Yeah but I play pool on Monday night, and I might like to have a drink, so sometimes I'm too hung over" …so he picked the Tuesday, yet he still hasn't been making it (Kirsten, 13, 460-462).*

Kirsten and her children had previously been housed in refuge accommodation because of her husband's violent behaviour. On leaving the refuge, they had moved in to a new flat, and he had been served with a Non-Molestation Order. This specified an exclusion zone, preventing him from approaching her or the property. She explained that he had continued to harass and intimidate her by subsequently moving into a flat in the same road, less than half a mile from her. He then asked, on the basis that his new home fell within the exclusion zone, that the terms of the Order be amended. To her dismay, the court granted his request:

> *It says he can't come within five metres of number 22 Grosvenor House, and I'm on the middle floor, so that means he can get within five metres of my front door, he can come to the top of my stairwell before he's in breach ((laughs)) (Kirsten, 13, 5).*

My second meeting with Kirsten did not go ahead because, I later found out (personal communication), her husband had indeed breached the terms of the court order; he had broken down her front door, physically assaulted her, and terrified their children. She and the children had once again returned to the relative safety of the refuge.

Participants' appraisal of their ex-partners

Having exited the relationship, participants reflected on what they had learned from their experiences. They talked about the ways in which they had been deceived by their ex-partners, and noted their seeming lack of either insight or contrition. Kim, for example, described her ex-husband thus:

> *…you just think like wow, those signs were there, but you just didn't pay atten- because he played such a victim, …he still does it now, he plays such a victim, and so yeah you feel sorry for him and just like, "Oh he's such a nice guy", …he could win an Oscar, for his performances I tell you, oh, if I knew then, what I know now, I would have run an absolute mile (Kim, 11, 520-526).*

Kirsten framed her appraisal of her ex-husband as a prediction:

I think that he is just going to leech onto someone else, …I think she's going to be, probably a single mum, a little bit vulnerable, will just like having a man around, …because his tenancy will run out in January, …but that's why I think it'll be someone that's already got a council place, like a single mum, …he'll walk in there, it'll be her money that pays for the food, the gas, the electric, and his money will be, "Oh I'll take you out tonight for a meal, because you deserve it", and that'll soon stop (Kirsten, 13, 568-576).

Ruth noted that she had read extensively about other women's accounts of abuse, and had been struck by the similarities between her ex-husband's and other perpetrators' behaviour. She had become friends with another woman who had left an abusive male partner, and commented:

…we keep saying we were married to the same man, it is uncanny, and she was very good at, but she was a few months ahead of me, and she was saying, "He'll do this next, this is what Eddy did, Gerald will do this", and he did it to the letter (Ruth, 25, 181-183).

Of her ex-husband, she said:

…what is really weird is he almost, he believes that he is right, …or does he, I don't know, but he seems to come across as believing that, that he is absolutely right to do what he's doing, …I mean, when he found out that I was seeing Jack, which was six months after we separated I met Jack, he said his reaction was, "Good God, do your parents know about this"? And yet his girlfriend was pregnant at the time, the girlfriend who he was seeing during our marriage, and he honestly believed that I had been so wrong to meet somebody six months after we'd separated, even though he was with somebody else, and she was with child ((laughs)) (Ruth, 25, 343-345).

Interpretation

In Chapter 4, I pointed to the congruence in terms of participants' experiences of living with abusive partners. I also noted that the strategies used by the men were consistent with the existing literature on DVA. A similar pattern emerged with regard to women's post-separation exposure to abuse. Despite having come to the relationship from a wide range of backgrounds, and with differing prior experiences, their stories of living with abuse and, having separated, the continuing harassment, intimidation and assault followed strikingly similar lines.

Unannounced visits from ex-partners, frequently in breach of court orders and often late at night, have been reported in a number of studies of post-separation DVA; criminal damage, intimidation and physical assault are common (see, for example, Cozzolino 2014; Logan and Cole 2011; Logan et al. 2007; Ornstein and Rickne 2013; Stark 2015). Many women choose to leave their homes in order to find safety but, because of the fear that their ex-partner might find them, they continue to live spatially restricted lives (Warrington 2001). Janet Bowstead (2017) acknowledges women's agency in leaving the abuse, but conceptualises these moves as 'forced migration' and a form of internal displacement. She studied the literal journeys away from domestic violence for more than 18,000 women in the UK (Bowstead 2015), and found that all of them had made multiple moves (up to 10) to escape their abusers. In each case, the woman had moved due to the ongoing risk posed by her

abuser. Bowstead (2017) noted three key pressure points in women's journeys that, in addition to other difficulties caused by multiple moves, made their experiences more fragmented and disruptive. They suffered a lack of information on rights and services, a lack of continuity in terms of the services they received, and lost possessions and housing rights when moving across local authority boundaries.

For most of the participants in my study, their ex-partners' access to their children forced them to have ongoing contact. This meant that, even when they tried to keep their address from him, he was able to find out where they lived. Kamala, however, had moved several times, across local authority boundaries, to prevent her husband from finding her. Despite having received a prison sentence for his abuse, he had continued to pursue her. For her own safety, but at significant emotional and psychological cost, she had been rehoused in an area that was chosen because it had few South Asian families. By the time we met, she had lost contact with her community and previous friends and was living a long way away from her family. Several years after having left her husband, she remained exhausted and, despite the multiple moves, terrified that he would find her.

As discussed in Chapter 4, most participants had been subjected to financial abuse whilst living with their partners. This can often prevent women from leaving abusive relationships (Sharp-Jeffs 2015) and, for those who do manage to leave, abusers use a range of strategies to attempt to sabotage their economic wellbeing (Sanders 2015). Nicola Sharp-Jeffs argues that 'specific actions are taken by perpetrators to control, exploit and sabotage an individual's financial resources' (Sharp-Jeffs 2015, p46). She found that tactics such as damaging or stealing property, prolonging the sale of joint property, failing to pay child support, and engaging women in protracted and expensive court proceedings were common forms of post-separation financial abuse and formed part of an ongoing pattern of intimate partner violence. Most of the participants in my study described actions that their ex-partners had taken to disadvantage them financially. Kirsten was struggling to provide basic needs, such as heating and clothing for herself and her children, because her ex-husband had resigned from his job to avoid paying maintenance. Several participants had been cheated out of their homes and, as a result, their financial situations were precarious. In losing her business and other assets, as well as her home, Colette had lost her means to earn an income and the longer-term financial security for which she had worked so hard.

Stalking and harassment via the use of technology is increasingly used by perpetrators to create a sense of their omnipresence and continue their abuse (Woodlock 2017). Women are expected to take steps, often at significant cost to themselves, to avoid being harassed. Changing their phone number, for example, can render them uncontactable by services and other forms of support. In Leonie's case, this included specialist employment agencies with whom she was registered. Her ex-husband's behaviour represented offences against the Offences Against the Person Act (1861), Malicious Communications Act (1988), and the Protection from Harassment Act (1997). Having cautioned him for his physical intimidation and harassment, when he switched to cyberstalking, the police failed to take action. Leonie, therefore, was forced to choose between risking loss of contact with prospective employers (and other peripheral acquaintances) and preventing her ex-husband from terrorising her.

Ravi Thiara (2013) argues that the lack of effective agency intervention in post-separation abuse renders women and children unprotected when they do what professionals expect them to do, i.e. leave their abuser. Participants in this study were keen to move on from the abusive relationship and achieve 'realignment' (Abrahams 2010). However, this desire was

regularly undermined by their partners' post-separation behaviour, and by the agencies' seeming inability to appreciate the extent, and intent, of their husbands' manipulation.

Thus far in the chapter, the spotlight has focussed on perpetrators' post-separation abuses of women's bodily integrity. In the next section, I shorten the focal length of the beam and increase the area illuminated. A feminist poststructuralist approach allows for an analysis of the men's more insidious attempts to undermine their partners' attempts to achieve safety, and the extent to which professionals help or hinder these processes.

Feminist poststructuralist interpretation: cultural scaffolding of post-separation abuse

As noted in Chapters 3 and 4, a range of cultural narratives and popular discourses shape women's, and men's, understandings of their experiences. They also shape the responses from agencies charged with protecting women and children from abuse. Adopting a feminist poststructuralist approach allows a broader examination of the ways in which these dominant discourses can frustrate women's attempts, having left the relationship, to achieve safety.

Within heteropatriarchy, notions of pursuit as romantic behaviour and a man's home as his 'castle' serve to normalise men's post-separation harassment of their ex-partners. All of the men who continued to pursue their ex-partners drew on these discourses. Women's embarrassment, and desire to protect their children, frequently led them to manage their ex-partners' behaviour without the involvement of others; in the process, they helped to shield the men from child and adult protection professionals (McKie 2005).

Stereotypical images of DVA victims (meek and anxious working-class women) and perpetrators (physically intimidating and angry working class men), and dominant discourses in which fathers' rights, at all costs, to maintain relationships with their children, served to subjugate many of the women in my study. Despite clear evidence that their partners were using child contact arrangements to continue their abuse, justice and child protection systems frequently failed to recognise this manipulation. Had they done so, they could have used their legal powers to challenge the men's behaviour. As a result, women were prevented from taking steps to achieve safety.

Kirsten's ex-husband had kept insisting on changing the arrangements for contact with his children. Each time, he forced her to return to court, where he used the opportunity to verbally abuse and intimidate her. Having achieved his stated aim of agreeing more manageable arrangements, he consistently failed to keep the contact appointments. Not only would this have been distressing for his children, but it also meant costly and unnecessary journeys for Kirsten to and from the contact centre. This made his claims of wanting to maintain relationships with his children rather questionable, yet the court continued to put his rights as a father above Kirsten's right to live free from his abuse.

Ruth's ex-husband had also used child contact arrangements to continue his abuse. Insisting on collecting and returning their daughter in dark and isolated locations, and changing these arrangements at very short notice, were clearly designed to intimidate Ruth and disrupt her life as much as possible. As Kirsten's ex-husband had done, Gerald regularly forced Ruth back to court to challenge his demands for further contact with his daughter. Ruth's solicitor, who was fully aware of the extent of her ex-husband's abuse, had advised against mentioning DVA in court on the basis that this might affect her credibility with the judge.

Presenting as a well-dressed, articulate, devoted father, Gerald would not have fitted the stereotype of 'perpetrator'; similarly well-dressed and articulate, Ruth would not have presented as the stereotypical 'victim' of DVA. Recent research suggests that her solicitor's advice may have been well-founded, although not disclosing her ex-husband's abuse to the court also came at a price.

Jane Callaghan (2015) notes the ways in which the DVA literature pathologises mothers whilst, at the same time, rendering the perpetrator almost entirely invisible. Thus, talk of 'parenting' in cases of DVA is, in fact, referring to 'mothering' and, as noted in Chapter 1, the dominant discourse is one in which women are constructed as blameworthy for not ending the abuse. When they do attempt to end the abuse, by leaving the relationship, they enter the realm of child contact, in which the focus is on the future relationship between the father and his children. Its rights-based discourse, and presumption of contact, renders DVA invisible and problematises mothers who challenge professionals' decisions (Hester 2011).

Women's Aid, in their report, Nineteen Child Homicides' (2016), point to men's use of family courts as a means of continuing their abuse of their ex-partners. They argue that, by accommodating their repeated, and often spurious, applications for access to their children, the courts allow men to revictimize women. Despite the significant body of evidence showing men's use of child contact arrangements (Elizabeth et al. 2012b; Harne 2011; Holt 2011; Thiara and Humphreys 2015), Thiara and Gill (2012) note solicitors' frequent minimisation of abuse, and a common perception by the courts that women in child contact cases claim to be a victim of DVA in response to not 'getting their own way'. Mothers who resist post-separation contact are blamed for attempting to interfere with the father-child relationship (Holt 2016).

It seems, then, that mothers experiencing DVA cannot win. If they disclose the abuse to the courts, they and their abusers are judged according to their fit with the stereotypes. If either they or their ex-partner does not fit this standard mould, her accounts of abuse are doubted, and she is considered to be attempting to manipulate the judicial process. If mothers do not disclose their experiences of abuse, their ex-partner's manipulation of those same processes goes unexamined and unchallenged. The implicit assumption, on the part of professionals, is that fathers are, or can be persuaded to be, reasonable. This leaves women disadvantaged and vulnerable to further abuse. In these cases, professionals' naivete effectively becomes collusion with the perpetrator.

Jane Monckton-Smith (2014) argues that the way in which our society conceptualises DVA is the real barrier to progress. She notes that, although the definition has changed, the discourses and stereotypes have not been meaningfully challenged.

> *If the abuse has been rewritten, we need to seriously attempt to rewrite the actors (Monckton-Smith 2014).*

Interpreting perpetrators' behaviour: Dark Triad

In Chapter 3, I used the model of Dark Triad (Paulhus and Williams 2002), a combination of Narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy, and suggested that, rather than having met their future partners by chance, they were deliberately targeted by them. The criteria by which they were assessed were: their situational availability; attractiveness in terms of either physical characteristics or situational factors; and their perceived ease of

manipulation (Sullivan 2008). I pointed to the ways in which, having been selected by the men, women were manipulated into committing to a longer-term relationship. I then argued, in Chapter 4, that perpetrators next began a process of mortification of their previous identities (Goffman 1968) in order to take complete control of their partners. In this chapter, I have set out the strategies used to attempt to regain that control once women had left the relationship.

Rather than viewing the men's actions as a series of discrete incidents, which much of the health and social science literature (described in Chapter 1) tends to do, I argue that they are part of a pattern of behaviours intended to oppress their partners. I also contend that the wider cultural scaffolding of heteropatriarchy creates the power relations and dominant discourses in which abusive behaviours can flourish. The strategies adopted by the men, as described by participants, were on a continuum from the more flagrant abuses of women's bodily integrity to the more insidious attempts to undermine their ability to move on. The Narcissistic sense of entitlement, in which women and children are seen as property rather than autonomous individuals with the right to resist abuse by ending the relationship, drove the men to attempt to force them to return. When their attempts at persuasion failed, they used harassment, intimidation and assault. As Burgess et al (1997) note, perpetrators are initially open in their attempts to communicate with their ex-partners; when they prove to be unsuccessful, they begin a process of discrediting them. I suggest that, having failed to coerce their partners into returning to the relationship, the men in my study assumed the right to punish her for leaving.

Armed with intimate knowledge of their ex-partners' greatest fears and secrets, the men were able to torment and humiliate their victims (Logan et al. 2006). Mobile technologies have increased the ease with which this can be accomplished (Belknap 2012; Dimond et al. 2011); perpetrators are able to broadcast humiliating content to a wide range of people. Almost all of the perpetrators described by participants had used online and offline means to shame and discredit them as a punishment for leaving and, for those who had children, abusing child contact arrangements proved another effective means by which they could attack.

DVA perpetrators' abuse of justice and child contact systems is well-documented in the literature (see, for example, APPGDV 2016; Campbell 2017; Elizabeth et al. 2010; Elizabeth et al. 2012a; Elizabeth et al. 2012b; Jaffe et al. 2003; Macdonald 2016). Susan Miller and Nicole Smolter (2011) use the term 'paper abuse' to describe the barrage of frivolous claims, false reports and other manipulations of these systems. By tying them into lengthy battles through the family courts, the perpetrators in my study ensured that they remained their partner's primary focus, significantly undermined her financial stability, and restricted her ability to move on from the relationship.

As noted in Chapter 4, in attempting to make sense of their ex-partners' behaviours, understandably, participants applied their own values and standards (formulated within the cultural scaffolding of heteropatriarchy); initially, this left them puzzled. Then they alluded to mental illness (for example, Ruth's assertion that her ex-husband was delusional), personality disorder or problematic drug use as the possible cause. The problem with this way of conceptualising their ex-partners' behaviour is that it shifts the focus from the men onto the particular issue, and thus removes the need for the men to take responsibility for their abuse. It also reduces women's ability to accurately predict future behaviour. I suggest that the model of Dark Triad is far more useful, in that it shifts the focus away from an

individual man onto a pattern of behaviour, both for women experiencing DVA and for those attempting to support their attempts to achieve safety.

Perpetrators are not operating with the same values and standards as their partners. They have an exaggerated sense of entitlement, and the patriarchal view of their partners as property; she and their children are merely objects to be manipulated for his self-gratification. In Machiavellian style, they simply say and do whatever they need to, in order to get what they want. The usual links between how we represent reality (even when we are lying) and our own perceptions of that 'reality' are, for Dark Triad men, completely missing – although they will use information based on shared knowledge (i.e. 'reality') if their plausibility in any given context needs enhancing. For example, Ruth talked about her ex-husband's shock and disdain when he discovered that she had started a new relationship. She was bemused by his apparent double standards. Viewed through the lens of Dark Triad, his reaction appears more logical. His Narcissistic sense of self was understandably threatened by her new relationship, not least because he knew that it would reduce his ability to control her, so was instantly motivated to do whatever possible to undermine it and punish her. His reaction had little to do with the reality that he had behaved far more unacceptably; he was simply using language in an attempt to damage her new relationship (or, at least, taint the way she viewed it). His response was Machiavellian in the sense that it was 'fit for purpose'. There were no other witnesses to the conversation, and it had the desired effect of undermining her confidence (albeit temporarily) by making her question her own behaviour, and rationalise it. In other contexts, with witnesses, for example, he chose more sophisticated tactics. This supports my contention that, rather than being helpless victims of their own weaknesses, perpetrators are strategic in their use of these behaviours.

Whilst most participants experienced most of the behaviours discussed in this chapter, not all of the men necessarily deployed every one of these strategies. Colette, for example, spoke about her ex-husband's unreasonable behaviour during their marriage, but gave no indication that he had abused her once she had left the relationship. This, too, can be interpreted within a Dark Triad framework; by reasserting patriarchal control in taking sole ownership of their business and property, and removing her and their children from the home, it is possible that he had achieved what he wanted and, therefore, had no need to pursue her post-separation.

As noted earlier, within a heteropatriarchal society, the cultural scaffolding of DVA provides a space with opportunities for perpetrators. Drawing on the same dominant discourses as participants, the professionals and the systems with which they came in to contact often colluded with the abusive men. In not seeing, or not challenging, perpetrators' manipulation of those systems, professionals had some responsibility for the men's abuse of their ex-partners. In this respect, DVA can be understood as a state crime, with male perpetrators as 'proxy agents of the patriarchal state' (Rose 2015, p33).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed and interpreted participants' experiences of post-separation abuse. Their stories are consistent with the existing literature, which notes men's use of similar strategies, and their abuse of the various systems designed to support women's journeys to safety. From a feminist poststructuralist perspective, the wider cultural

scaffolding of heteropatriarchy is rendered available for scrutiny. Dark Triad is a helpful model for conceptualising perpetrators' manipulation of their ex-partners, their children, and professionals. It offers an alternative way of understanding men's abuse of their families, and has potential as a framework for predicting behaviour.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

My study was borne out of a frustration with the apparent ineffectiveness of the UK's current approaches to reducing the incidence of DVA, or mitigating its social and economic costs for women – who make up the overwhelming majority of primary victims. The wider social, economic and policy contexts of DVA are major sites at which male perpetrators manipulate their female partners, children, and those working with them. The focus of enquiry for much of the DVA research to date has been the behaviour of its victims. The questions that dominate this literature are to do with seeking commonalities between victims and exploring their reasons for tolerating the abuse, rather than examining the culpability of perpetrators and the socio-political systems in which they operate. Using the metaphor of a spotlight, I sought to explore, using a feminist poststructuralist framework, the processes by which heterosexual women enter, endure and leave abusive relationships. My particular focus was on the kinds of control mechanisms available to perpetrators of DVA, and the ways in which their use of those mechanisms shape women's experiences.

The aims of my study were to: provide a critique of the literature that highlights its gaps and weaknesses, and unsettles dominant understandings of DVA; better understand women's routes into DVA, by examining the space between normalised behaviour within heterosexual relationships and abuse; shine a spotlight on the full range of perpetrators' behaviours that entrap and oppress their female partners; and examine the responses to their circumstances from women's networks (family, friends, and professionals), and the extent to which they reinforce or challenge the perpetrator's control. In undertaking this work, my objectives were to: provide an alternative discourse on women's routes into and out of DVA, in which they are not positioned as 'blameworthy'; contribute to the existing knowledge base aimed at helping women to identify, and thus avoid, potential abusers; use my findings to inform policy and practice via publications, presentations, teaching and training.

In this chapter, I begin by evaluating my methodological approach in terms of its effectiveness in interrogating the existing literature on DVA and in enabling the collection of rich data. I then evaluate the extent to which my analysis and interpretation of those data meet the aims of my study. I consider what this means for the participants in my study, society more broadly, and for academic knowledge. Having reviewed my work, I then reflect on the strengths and limitations of my methodological approach. I end by setting out my plans for dissemination of this work, and suggesting some of the directions that future DVA research might usefully take.

Evaluation of my methodological approach

Although there is no simple feminist methodology, my aims and objectives reflect the key characteristics outlined by Skinner, et al (2005). Its focus is gender and, in particular, gender inequality. It is democratic in that it rejects the traditional academic distinction between the researcher and her/his 'subjects', and seeks to enable women's and other marginalised groups' experiences to be heard and valued. It is overtly political in the sense that it seeks to illuminate, and provide robust evidence for, the voices and experiences of marginalised groups. It openly acknowledges that the values and beliefs of the researcher will shape the process and output, that power operates within the researcher/researched relationship.

My study is historically and culturally contingent in that the 'knowledge' I have chosen to present indicates my gender, feminist politics, and the period in which I live. My starting point was that DVA cannot be viewed simply as something that is done to women. Nor can it be seen as something that women invite or deserve. It is a product of many different social processes, which act on and react to each other; it has never been, nor will it ever be, a static phenomenon. A strength of my feminist poststructuralist approach is that I have been able to demonstrate how women's experience of DVA, as well as its perpetration, and the law, policy, professional practice governing responses, are shaped and controlled by the discourses that purport to explain it.

The methodology, informed by a review of existing literature, addressed the first of my study aims. I highlighted the gaps and weaknesses in the mainstream literature on DVA and, in the process, challenged dominant understandings of this form of abuse. I uncovered the discursive practices with regard to professional and popular knowledge about DVA, and pointed to their consequences for policy and responses to this form of oppression. I illuminated the oppressive ways in which women experiencing DVA are positioned, in both traditional and contemporary explanations for abuse. In so doing, I highlighted the way in which the embedding of these explanations in political, professional and popular discourses limits the potential for women to act as agentic beings as they enter, endure and escape DVA. Thus, I demonstrated not just the oppressive power of discourse on women, but the ways in which it obscures the actions of perpetrators. These insights are reflected in, and central to, the findings.

Fourteen heterosexual women who had experienced DVA from a male partner participated in my study. They reflected a wide range of characteristics in terms of age, ethnicity, physicality, socio-economic status and the length of time elapsed since their experiences of abuse. Using semi-structured, narrative-style interviews provided me with a broad tapestry in terms of their accounts of their experiences of DVA. My attention to issues of power within the research process played a significant part in generating such a data-rich corpus for analysis. It allowed women to 'own' the interview space in a way that is not so easily achieved in more structured approaches, and to talk about the issues that were most meaningful for them. My active personal engagement, with the women who participated in my study, and with the topic, inevitably influenced the research process and the 'knowledge' produced. My methodology, therefore, allowed me to tell an authentic story, i.e. one that is faithful to the data.

My feminist poststructuralist approach was effective in terms of meeting the aims of my study, because it allowed me to illuminate the broader stage on which abusive relationships are played out. Using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), I have investigated and interpreted the wider range of factors that shape women's experiences. In combination, they allowed me to look at women's accounts of entering, enduring and leaving abusive relationships, and explore the ways in which their experiences and understandings were shaped by the behaviour of the perpetrator, i.e. his manipulation of her and her environment, and the larger context of heteropatriarchy within which this occurs.

The second of my aims was to better understand women's routes into DVA. Nicola Gavey's (2005) concept of 'cultural scaffolding', and Erving Goffman's (1968) work on 'mortification', the process by which participants' identities were dismantled in order to render them controllable, provided an original framework by which this aim was achieved. Thematic analysis (TA) gave me the tools to highlight participants' difficulty in naming normalised

heterosexual relationship behaviours as abusive, the discourses that mask abusive behaviours, and the unavailability of alternative discourses. TA also helped me to achieve the third of my aims, i.e. to decrease the focal length of the spotlight beam, and render available for scrutiny perpetrators' manipulation of the space between their partners' initial perceptions of their relationships as 'normal' and their later conceptualisations of them as 'abusive'.

From a feminist poststructuralist position, I reject personality theory as a way of explaining the behaviour of perpetrators. However, as an heuristic device for *describing* those behaviours and interpreting them within the context of the relationship, I drew on Delroy Paulhus' (2014; 2002) model of Dark Triad, a combination of Narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy. Whilst the model describes the abusive and controlling behaviour of the men in my study, I am not arguing that either the men or their behaviours fall into a separate category of 'abnormal'. Individualistic explanations tend to absolve perpetrators of responsibility, and lead to interventions that are damaging to women. I have reframed individual incidents as part of a broader regime of oppression; the abusive household is rendered visible, and thus available for scrutiny. Within the wider cultural scaffolding of heteropatriarchy, which creates the power relations and dominant discourses in which abusive behaviours can flourish, I argue that 'home' takes the form of a total institution. The mortification of women's previous identities, as described using the model of Dark Triad, entraps them in the relationship with their abuser. Thus, my feminist poststructuralist approach was effective in meeting the third of my aims, to expose the full range of behaviours used by perpetrators to entrap and oppress women. Rather than explaining DVA in terms of individual psychopathology, I attribute it to the position of men within heteropatriarchy.

In enabling an examination of the responses of others, my methodological approach helped me to achieve the fourth of my aims. In the earlier stages of the relationship, women's networks consisted of family and friends; later on, they also included professionals. Using Gavey's (2005) cultural scaffolding, and Braun and Clarke's (2013) TA, allowed me to point to the ways in which the people around each participant were also positioned within, and influenced by, heteropatriarchy. I was able to theorise the silences maintained by friends and family, in spite of any disquiet that they felt about the emerging relationship, and the less than helpful responses of professionals. Using Goffman's (1968) concept of 'mortification' and Paulhus' (2014; 2002) 'Dark Triad' allowed me to examine the extent to which all members of women's support networks were being manipulated by the perpetrator.

Critically reflecting on my methodological approach, I would note that there is very little research on older women's experiences of DVA. Most of the existing literature captures women from late teens to early forties, although a notable exception is June Keeling et al's (2016) study, which explored midlife (40-55 years) women's journeys from abuse to safety. However, the experiences of women over 55 years remain hidden. This is, in part, because DVA is obscured by broader categories (McGarry et al. 2017) such as the gender-neutral term 'elder abuse', in which perpetrators can include other family members, friends, neighbours, or people that the older person relies on for services. One of the limitations of my study is that, because participants ranged in age from twenty-six to forty-nine years, it does not address the experiences of older women. With hindsight, I would more actively seek participants who had experienced DVA beyond the age of 50 years.

Another potential weakness of my study is to do with my ethnicity as a white British researcher. I was keenly aware of the ways in which identities such as race and ethnicity intersect to shape women's experiences. Although I gave much attention to issues of power within the research/researched relationship, none of the five participants from black and minority ethnic communities spoke about racism in their accounts. There are two possible reasons for this. It could be that none considered racism as a factor in the responses they received from services. What seems more likely is that they did not feel comfortable framing their experiences in these terms or they believed that, if they had, that they would not be understood.

Evaluation of my findings

A range of adverse conditions has been identified in the literature that are considered to render heterosexual women at greater risk of experiencing DVA. These include poverty, disability, problematic substance use, mental ill health, personal inadequacy and negative childhood intrafamilial experiences. The presence or absence of these characteristics is said to determine the level to which someone is vulnerable to abuse, and being exposed to more than one of these 'risk factors' is considered to increase women's vulnerability. I have argued that the problem with much of the existing literature is that it tends to examine sub-populations of, in this case, heterosexual women for correlations between DVA and other factors, and then uncritically draw assumptions about causation. Firstly, this serves to shift responsibility for abuse on to either the victim or the characteristic itself, and away from the perpetrator. Secondly, it leaves unexamined the reasons why individuals without those conditions might be a victim or perpetrator of DVA. In drawing attention to these issues in my literature review, and through my chosen method for analysing my data, I have highlighted the weaknesses of those arguments. My findings, therefore, unsettle dominant understandings of DVA, and make their own contribution to the literature.

Beyond their shared identity as women who had experienced DVA, the women in my study represent a heterogeneous group with few identifiable similarities in terms of their SES, ethnicity or age. They had come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, but none had seen herself as living in poverty at the point she met her abuser. None of the fourteen considered herself to be learning disabled and, at the start of their abusive relationships, none had any physical impairment or alcohol/drug problems. Most women had been raised in nurturing, supportive families; five participants talked of less stable childhoods though, in most cases, any disadvantage was mitigated by other factors. Of these five, two had been exposed to more than one form of adversity and one of the two had been diagnosed with BPD during adolescence. As such, my sample challenges the claim in much of the literature that only certain 'types' of women experience DVA.

The context for participants' first encounters with their partners, again, did not appear to differ from those of other heterosexual women. In line with social norms of physical proximity and social homogamy, women had met their partners locally, at university or college, at work, in social settings that they frequented, or they had been introduced by friends or members of their family; one participant had met her partner online through their shared leisure interests. All fourteen participants had been in a position to assess the men, and take soundings from people they trusted, before entering into relationships with them.

Once again, my findings unsettle dominant understandings of DVA, and provide a more sophisticated narrative on women's routes into DVA.

My feminist poststructuralist approach allowed me to examine the wider influences on women's early relationship experiences, and the ways in which they make sense of them. In the early stages of their relationships, women had very little information with which to judge their partners' motives and make predictions about their future behaviours. The traditional, binary view of relationships, in which they are deemed either 'abusive' or 'normal' (Ashcraft 2000), creates a lacuna between these two labels. In this space, cultural tropes and dominant romantic discourses made it difficult for participants to define their relationship as anything other than normal. If trusted family members and friends had doubts about the women's new partners, with no sound evidence of the men's ill will, they kept them to themselves. This, then, becomes part of the cultural scaffolding (Gavey 2005) of DVA. In the absence of any alternative ways of conceptualising their experiences, participants defaulted to a romantic discourse to make sense of their partners' behaviour. For example, the intensity of the courtship, and the pressure to move the relationship to one of longer-term commitment, were interpreted as indications of the strength of their partners' feelings for them rather than a process of ensnarement. My analysis and interpretation thus allow for an elucidation of women's routes into DVA that does not position them as blameworthy.

Having interpreted the way women viewed their experiences of ensnarement, and theorised the silences of their friends and family networks, I focused the beam on the behaviour of the perpetrators. Applying Paulhus' (2014; 2002) concept of Dark Triad to my data, I have advanced an alternative understanding of perpetrators' early relationship behaviour. I suggest that women's first encounters with their partners did not happen purely by chance. The men weighed up participants' vulnerability, accessibility and attractiveness and, having decided that they were worth pursuing, began grooming them for abuse. In this process of target softening, men drew on the same discourses and cultural understandings of normalised courtship behaviour that their partners did. However, whilst women were making sense of their experiences, I suggest that men were exploiting this cultural scaffold in order to ensnare their victims. My argument poses a challenge to the dominant understandings of DVA, and provides a more sophisticated picture of the behaviours of perpetrators.

Despite the breadth of their experiences prior to meeting their partners, all fourteen women became ensnared in relationships with men who went on to abuse them. From that point on, their lives began to converge; their experiences, once they had committed to the relationship, became far more similar. My analytical tools were effective in highlighting the patterns I had sought in the data; my findings illuminate the full range of perpetrators' behaviours used to entrap and oppress their female partners. As such, my study can be positioned within the new, alternative literature that challenges traditional approaches to DVA.

In most cases, the previous attentiveness and affection that participants had received from their partners diminished. For some women, their partners' withdrawal of affection was sudden and shocking. For others, their men's coldness took the form of negative punishment, in which affection was removed in response to challenge from the women. This behaviourist technique proved an effective way of reducing the reoccurrence of the undesired behaviour. The men discredited their partners, either by behaving badly in the

company of women's friends and family, or by driving the women to behave bizarrely and contrasting their demeanour with their own calmness and self-control. The responses from women's friends and family included questioning her judgement in 'choosing' him as a partner and, in Marcia's case, her sanity. They had limited awareness of the extent to which they, too, were being manipulated by the perpetrator. Whether due to her behaviour, or because of the difficulty in maintaining the relationship with her, many, over time, tended to withdraw.

I have shown that participants experienced a range of emotional and psychological abuse, including frequently being compared unfavourably to members of their support network, sudden and alarming changes in their partners' behaviour, and 'mind games' that left them questioning their own sanity. I have also established that, at the same time, the women were slowly being isolated from friends and family. They were put under close surveillance by their partners, and allowed very little or no privacy or freedom. I have pointed to the ways in which participants were being financially abused by their partners; any assets that they had brought to the relationship were seized, and they were prevented from owning anything of value. Some women, who were financially dependent on their partners, were given inadequate budgets with which to feed and clothe themselves and their children. Nearly all participants had been subjected to physical and sexual abuse. I have demonstrated that, not only did men attempt to dismantle women's previous identities, but they also spoiled their aspirational identities as spouse, mother and home-maker.

My findings expose the ways in which perpetrators responded when women challenged their partners' behaviour. Initially, participants received apologies – but these were instrumental rather than genuine displays of remorse. As the relationship progressed, the men engaged in minimisation and denial, and used fear (instilled through violence, and either overt threats or insinuations of further violence – including murder) to prevent their partners from leaving. Women were kept in a state of hypervigilance, and increasingly isolated from their support networks. Most participants struggled to make sense of their experiences. Whilst nearly all of the women had been subjected to physical and sexual abuse, unless this took the more stereotypical forms of DVA, such as beating or throttling, they struggled to conceptualise it as such. They drew on individualistic explanations for their partners' behaviour that positioned the men as hapless, helpless, or victims of work-related stress, mental ill health or problematic substance use. My interpretation of these behaviours makes an original contribution to the literature by providing a credible challenge to individualistic explanations for DVA, explaining the constraints on women's ability to fully comprehend their situation, and illuminating the calculated nature of perpetrator behaviours.

All of the participants in my study managed to exit the relationship with their abuser. However, physically separating from him rarely ended the oppression. Most participants spoke about their partners' response to their attempts to exit the relationship. Women's experiences of post-separation abuse included: intimidation; criminal damage and assault; being discredited to their friends, family and the professionals working with them; financial abuse; stalking and harassment. They also noted the men's abuse of the justice, child contact and child protection systems, and the extent to which those systems were complicit, in either prolonging or sabotaging women's journeys to safety. Not all of the professionals within those systems were aware of extent to which they were being manipulated by the perpetrator. Whilst, for many, their role was to help women and children achieve safety,

their limited awareness meant that they often, unwittingly, colluded with the perpetrator in frustrating women's attempts to exit the relationship. All of the strategies employed by their partners, both during the relationship and post-separation, are entirely consistent with previous research in this field. Whilst much of the traditional literature presents a somewhat decontextualized picture of DVA as a series of incidents or behaviours, feminist studies point to it as a pattern of behaviours designed to oppress.

My methodological approach, and the findings of my study, provide a robust challenge to the traditional literature on DVA. Many of the existing accounts provide a somewhat decontextualized picture, in which the focus is on the various forms of abuse and the 'risk factors' that increase the likelihood of individuals becoming either perpetrators or victims. My study shortens the focal length of the spotlight beam, and illuminates the broader context within which DVA is performed, experienced and understood. It draws attention to DVA as an overall pattern of behaviours, performed by men, within a culture of heteropatriarchy, from the moment they enter women's lives until long after the relationship has ended. As such, it unsettles many of the current understandings about this form of abuse, and makes a valuable contribution to the literature.

For participants, my thesis provides an alternative discourse on women's routes into DVA, in which they are not positioned as 'blameworthy'. For women more broadly, it highlights the subtle ways in which their perceptions and understandings of the early stages of intimate relationships are shaped by sociocultural factors. It also offers them a model within which prospective partners can be more critically scrutinised. In challenging the notion of 'risk factors' in traditional explanations for DVA, it unsettles current understandings in the academic literature in which it is the characteristics and prior experiences of women, rather than the predatory behaviours of men, that render women vulnerable to abuse.

Domestic violence and abuse does not occur in a vacuum. The categorisation of the various forms of abuse experienced by women is helpful in identifying the specific behaviours of which it is constituted, and is essential for research that seeks to increase our understanding of those phenomena. However, assigning these behaviours to discrete categories also has the effect of obscuring women's cradle to grave experiences of male violence. My study, though specific to women's experiences of abuse by intimate male partners, also sits within the broader body of work on violence against women. In drawing on Nicola Gavey's (2005) work on the cultural scaffolding of rape, I have echoed the links made by other feminist writers between DVA and sexual violence. I have also pointed to the similarities, in terms of perpetrators' strategies for victim selection and grooming, between DVA and child sexual abuse (Sullivan 2008). What links these and other more recent 'scandals', such as the silences surrounding decades of the abuse of women in Hollywood (Davies and Khomami 2017), UK parliament (Walker 2017) and the BBC (Martinson and Grierson 2016), is the cultural scaffolding of heteropatriarchy.

The original contribution that my study adds to current knowledge

Most of the existing literature on DVA positions women as objects of study rather than informants and, as such, presents a relatively simplistic and deterministic picture of DVA. Much of the feminist body of work within this, which explores women's experiences from their own perspective, tends to fragment women's journeys into and out of abusive relationships. Most studies focus on their experiences of living with DVA; far fewer explore

their routes into these relationships, or their post-separation experiences. My study makes an original contribution to this literature in that, using a narrative approach, I have charted women's journeys from before they met the men who would go on to abuse them until after they had exited the relationship. Combining all of the stages of women's journeys in this way allowed me to illuminate the links between them and, thus, provide a more integrated perspective on the machinations of perpetrators.

Nicola Gavey's (2005) concept of 'cultural scaffolding', designed to develop a better understanding of rape, has not previously been applied to women's experiences of DVA. Drawing on Gavey's work, I have examined the space between normalised heterosexual relationships and DVA and, in the process, provided a more sophisticated account of women's routes into this form of abuse. I have shone a spotlight on the full range of perpetrators' behaviours that entrap and oppress their female partners. Drawing on Goffman's (1968) work, I have theorised the abusive home as a 'total institution' in which, by the process of 'mortification', perpetrators attempt to render them controllable. Thus, I have identified four key domains in which the tactics of the abuser work to: ensnare his victim; dismantle her previous identities; prevent her from leaving; and punish her for leaving. These include behaviours used to manipulate women's social and support networks in order to prolong or sabotage their attempts to escape the abuse. From a feminist poststructuralist perspective, my study shows that women's experiences of entering, enduring and leaving abusive relationships can be read as part of the wider cultural scaffolding of heteropatriarchy, which left them exposed to ensnarement and exploitation. Dark Triad (Paulhus and Williams 2002) has been used to research jealousy (Barelds et al. 2017; Chin et al. 2017) and attachment in romantic relationships (Brewer et al. 2018). However, in these studies, it is applied in terms of a combination of stable personality characteristics and, therefore, used to explain those phenomena. It has not been applied to DVA, and has never been used as a way of describing and interpreting abusive behaviours. Using Dark Triad as a model for conceptualising perpetrators' manipulation of their ex-partners, their children, and professionals, my study offers an original way of understanding men's abuse of their female partners.

As I have indicated, my study provides a robust challenge to mainstream accounts of DVA and, as such, unsettles those dominant understandings. My work has been informed, and enriched, by that of other feminist poststructuralist writers on violence against women. The unique combination of Gavey's (2005), Goffman's (1968), and Paulhus' (2002) concepts that make up my methodological approach complements the existing feminist literature; it is within this body of knowledge that my study confidently sits.

Dissemination of my work

Ruth Fassinger and Susan Morrow (2013) suggest that ethical researchers will want to think carefully about how they withdraw from the field in which they collect their data. They note the benefits of involving participants, and the communities from which they are drawn, in the dissemination of one's findings. I wished to do more for the participants in my study than simply providing them with a summary of my results. I have taken a relational approach to this work, and have positioned participants as collaborators rather than simply 'the researched'. I also recognised that, as experts on their own experiences, they would be well-placed to provide valuable feedback on my analysis of their narratives. Drawing on that

feedback before finalising my thesis would add to the quality and trustworthiness of my study. For these reasons, I have presented my findings at a series of events for the women's groups from which I drew participants, and asked for their evaluation of my tentative interpretation. The feedback from participants, as well as the groups more widely, indicated that the accounts I presented were faithful to their narratives, and that they were positive about the way in which I had interpreted their stories. As such, the feedback meets my objective of collaboration with participants and, at the same time, supports the authenticity of my findings. I have also presented to groups of practitioners working with DVA, and academic audiences at a number of conferences. (A full list of these dissemination events can be found on page iv.) I have drawn, and will continue to draw, on my findings in teaching MSC Social Work students at the University of Bedfordshire.

I plan to submit papers from this work to other academic conferences in the future, and to academic journals. One paper, Abused Women's Perceptions of Professionals' Responses: Valued Support, or Collusion with the Perpetrator?' has already been submitted to a journal. It has been reviewed, and I have responded to the reviewers' comments. At the time of writing, I am waiting to hear whether it has been accepted for publication. Thus, I am meeting, and will continue to meet in the future, my objectives of providing an alternative discourse on women's experiences of DVA, and contributing to the existing knowledge base.

Implications of my work for future research, policy and practice

My overall aim in carrying out this work was not to generalise my findings to broader populations of women, but to maximise the breadth of experiences, and perspectives on those experiences, on which I could draw. This has allowed me to interrogate and develop existing theory and, ultimately, provided a theoretical understanding that can be taken up by other researchers.

My study suggests that much more could be done, in terms of prevention of, and effective responses to, DVA. Individualistic understandings have obscured the ways in which statutory agencies are complicit in the abuse by failing to hold perpetrators accountable for their behaviour (Downes et al. 2014; Romito 2008; Rose 2015). Agencies working with child sexual exploitation, for example, are beginning to broaden their focus from children as victims to include a much closer scrutiny of perpetrators. In addition to providing support for children who are at risk of being, or who have been, sexually exploited, much of the work being done in this area is on disrupting the activities of perpetrators (College of Policing 2013). My findings could inform the development of a future study looking at the effectiveness of disruption strategies in DVA prevention.

A feminist poststructuralist approach challenges the notion of universal categories such as 'woman', and emphasises the contingent nature of identity. It draws on the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 2005; Crenshaw 2012) to explain people's experiences and, particularly, women's experiences, i.e. the ways in which identities based on, for example, gender, ethnicity, nationality, race, age, sexuality and physicality, and the relative power that women possess within those identities, intersect to shape their experiences. From this perspective, each individual woman, due to her specific characteristics and context, experiences domestic abuse in a unique way. However, for women with no recourse to public funds, women under surveillance in closed communities and women with disabilities, for example, these issues are compounded. I acknowledge the importance of researching

such groups. Unfortunately, it was beyond the scope of my thesis, but my methodology could be applied to these populations at a later date.

There is very little recent literature on male to female DVA; a more recent focus for researchers has been on applying what is known about DVA in heterosexual relationships to, for example, same-sex relationships, or DVA in transgender communities. These issues have received scant attention to date, and more work is needed to improve understanding of the ways in which sexuality intersects with gender and violence. These foci for investigation are clearly important, and some studies do point to patriarchy as a subcultural issue within which heterosexuality still provides the dominant model (see, for example, Scott 1994). However, the relative scarcity of new studies gives the impression that male to female DVA is now fully understood. The danger is that, in this process, the cultural scaffolding of heteropatriarchy is being rendered invisible and, thus, the majority of victims and perpetrators 'disappear'. Indeed, Evan Stark notes that, if we want to eradicate DVA, we need to raise its status (Stark 2015). My study will be useful for two reasons. Firstly, the publications and conference presentations to come out of this work will help to counter the view that there is little more to be learned about DVA in heterosexual relationships. Secondly, it points to a further line of enquiry, i.e. whether the dominance of heteropatriarchy in shaping same-sex relationships means that similar Dark Triad behaviours would be relevant to understanding abuse in those relationships.

My study has applications for a range of professional and policy communities. As an academic researcher, part of my role, as I see it, is to highlight the issues, and their impact, for professionals. Furthermore, given my role as Coordinator of Making Research Count at the University of Bedfordshire, I consider that I have a good understanding of the approach required. My data have identified weaknesses, as well as strengths, in agency responses to domestic violence. However, it was not my intention in undertaking this research to highlight 'failings' in the various components of the social and welfare system. I believe such an approach to be unhelpful because it can generate, quite understandably, a defensive response from agencies that are often overstretched in terms of resources. Having written up my findings, however, I would like to work alongside communities of professionals, as critical and reflexive practitioners, to develop their understanding of DVA as a complex set of behaviours, performed by both victims and perpetrators, and help them to reflect on what my findings mean for practice. Some of the agency responses that I have discussed help to reduce women to, and fix them as, 'victim'. They trap them in the present (Ptacek 1999), and prevent 'realignment' (Abrahams 2010). The systems of agencies, and the understandings of individuals working within them, can serve to reinforce the perpetrator's tactics to isolate his victim. My aspiration would be to work together with professionals to find ways of improving policy and practice responses to DVA.

I consider that it would be helpful for practitioners working with DVA to understand the dynamics operating within the 'total institution' of the abusive household. It is well-documented, for example, that health in prison populations is dire (see, for example, Awofeso 2010; Condon et al. 2008; Heidari et al. 2014; Peate 2017; Plugge and Fitzpatrick 2005; Wolfe et al. 2014). Basic preventative and early intervention health regimes that those in the 'outside world' take for granted, such as dental hygiene and regular health checks, are effectively denied to the incarcerated. Where they are permitted, the contact is carefully controlled in order to prevent escape. The policies and rules of the system, for which surveillance and control (rather than inspection or care) are the key concerns, make it

extremely difficult for these services to penetrate the institution. It would be helpful for professionals to understand that similar dynamics operate within abusive households. Isolation removes women's opportunities for unmediated contact with the outside world, and those that are permitted are carefully controlled by the perpetrator (via discreditation, psychological and emotional abuse and surveillance) to prevent genuine engagement.

As mentioned in the earlier section on dissemination, I have worked on a paper that I consider to be useful for practitioners and policy makers. It sets out participants' perceptions of the responses they received from professionals, and suggests ways in which these might be improved. If the more powerful entities involved with women experiencing DVA, i.e. the statutory agencies charged with protecting them, were to view perpetrators through a more critical lens, they would be more aware of the role they play, and could play, in diminishing the power of perpetrators.

For women who have experienced DVA, thinking in terms of cultural scaffolding and Dark Triad opens up possibilities for examining and learning from their route into abuse that does not require them to be positioned as blameworthy. For women more generally, it provides a space in which the precursors to abuse are made visible, and thus available for challenge. One application of my findings would be to introduce this model for understanding heterosexual relationships, and the cultural milieu in which they are experienced, to young women via schools, women's centres and other systems in which they acquire information and advice and receive pastoral care.

82,748 words

References

(1861). *Offences Against the Person Act*, United Kingdom.

(1988). *Malicious Communications Act*, United Kingdom.

(1997). *Protection from Harassment Act*, United Kingdom.

(2015). "Serious Crime Act". The Stationery Office: London.

(2017). "Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence Act 2017".

Abrahams, H. (2007). *Supporting Women After Domestic Violence: Loss, Trauma and Recovery*, London: Jessica Kingsley.

Abrahams, H. (2010). *Rebuilding Lives After Domestic Violence: Understanding Long-Term Outcomes*, London: Jessica Kingsley.

Abramson, K. (2014). "Turning up the lights on gaslighting." *Philosophical Perspectives*, 28(1), 1-30.

Adams, A., Tolman, R., Bybee, D., Sullivan, C., and Kennedy, A. (2013). "The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Low-Income Women's Economic Well-Being." *Violence Against Women*, 18(12), 1345-1367.

Adams, D. (2007). *Why Do They Kill? Men Who Murder Their Intimate Partners*, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Alexander, H. (2014). "Oscar Pistorius: Financial ruin or a return to riches?"*The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group: London.

Ali, T., Mogren, I., and Krantz, G. (2013). "Intimate Partner Violence and Mental Health Effects: A Population-Based Study among Married Women in Karachi, Pakistan." *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 20(1), 131-139.

Allen, M. (2011). "Is there gender symmetry in intimate partner violence?" *Child & Family Social Work*, 16(3), 245-254.

Almeida, R., and Bograd, M. (1991). "Sponsorship." *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 2(3-4), 243-259.

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.)*, Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

Anda, R. F., Felitti, V. J., Bremner, J. D., Walker, J. D., Whitfield, C., Perry, B. D., Dube, S. R., and Giles, W. H. (2006). "The enduring effects of abuse and related adverse experiences in childhood. A convergence of evidence from neurobiology and epidemiology." *European Archives Of Psychiatry And Clinical Neuroscience*, 256(3), 174-186.

Anderson, A., and West, S. G. (2011). "Violence Against Mental Health Professionals: When the Treater Becomes the Victim." *Innovations in Clinical Neuroscience*, 8(3), 34-39.

Ansara, D. L., and Hindin, M. J. (2011). "Psychosocial Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence for Women and Men in Canada." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26(8), 1628-1645.

APPGDV. (2016). *Domestic Abuse, Child Contact and the Family Courts*. All Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic Violence, London.

Ashcraft, C. (2000). "Naming Knowledge: A Language for Reconstructing Domestic Violence and Systemic Gender Inequity." *Women & Language*, 23(1), 3.

Atwood, J. D. (1991). "Domestic Violence: The Role of Alcohol." *JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association*, 265(4), 460-460.

Auchter, B. (2010). "Men Who Murder Their Families: What the Research Tells Us." *National Institute of Justice Journal*, 266.
Avni, N. (1991). "Battered Wives: The Home as a Total Institution." *Violence and Victims*, 6(2), 137-149.
Awofeso, N. (2010). "Preventing suicides in prison settings-The role of mental health promotion policies and programs." *Advances in Mental Health*, 9(3), 255-262.
Backus, F. R., and Mahalik, J. R. (2011). "The Masculinity of Mr. Right: Feminist Identity and Heterosexual Women's Ideal Romantic Partners." *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 35(2), 318-326.
Baker, H. (2012). "Problematising the Relationship between Teenage Boys and Parent Abuse: Constructions of Masculinity and Violence." *Social Policy and Society*, 11(2), 265-276.
Baker, S. E., and Edwards, R. (2012). *How Many Qualitative Interviews is Enough? Expert Voices and Early Career Reflections on Sampling and Cases in Qualitative Research*. National Centre for Research Methods, Unpublished.
Bandura, A. (1963). *Social Learning and Personality Development*, London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
Barelds, D. P. H., Dijkstra, P., Groothof, H. A. K., and Pastoor, C. D. (2017). "The Dark Triad and three types of jealousy: Its' relations among heterosexuals and homosexuals involved in a romantic relationship." *Personality and Individual Differences*, 116, 6-10.
BBC (2014). "Linah Keza death: Stabbed model told police she was 'petrified' of boyfriend". [online] Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-27193728 (Accessed: 25th September 2016).
BBC (2015a). *Magistrate Yvonne Davies and husband dead in 'murder-suicide'.* [online] Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-30869569 (Accessed: 25th September 2016).
BBC (2015b). *Penistone fire death dad Darren Sykes lured sons with new train set.* [online] Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-31700835 (Accessed: 25th September 2016).
Beckmann, D., and Junker, H. (1973). "Structures of married couples in the Giessen Test." *Zeitschrift für Psychotherapie und medizinische Psychologie*, 23(4), 140-150.
Belknap, J. (2012). "The Roles of Phones and Computers in Threatening and Abusing Women Victims of Male Intimate Partner Abuse." *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy*, 19, 373.
Bentham, M. (2016). "Revealed: shocking rise in domestic abuse of women in London". *London Evening Standard*. Evening Standard Ltd: London.
Bindel, J. (2014). "Criminalising coercive control will not help victims of domestic abuse". *Guardian*. Guardian News and Media: London.
Birditt, K. S., Hope, S., Brown, E., and Orbuch, T. (2012). "Developmental Trajectories of Marital Happiness Over 16 Years." *Research in Human Development*, 9(2), 126-144.
Black, C. (2010). *Charlie Sheen Dodges Jail Time for Assault on Wife Brooke Mueller.* [online] Available at: http://www.cbsnews.com/news/charlie-sheen-dodges-jail-time-for-assault-on-wife-brooke-mueller/ (Accessed: 5 November 2015).
Black, D., Sussman, S., and Unger, J. (2010). "A Further Look at the Intergenerational Transmission of Violence: Witnessing Interparental Violence in Emerging Adulthood." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 25(6), 1022-1042.

Blais, J., and Pruysers, S. (2017). "The power of the dark side: personality, the dark triad, and political ambition." *Personality and Individual Differences*, 113, 167-172.

Boeckel, M. G., Blasco-Ros, C., Grassi-Oliveira, R., and Martínez, M. (2014). "Child Abuse in the Context of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women: The Impact of Women's Depressive and Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms on Maternal Behavior." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 29(7), 1201-1227.

Bogolyubova, O., Panicheva, P., Tikhonov, R., Ivanov, V., and Ledovaya, Y. (2018). "Dark personalities on Facebook: Harmful online behaviors and language." *Computers in Human Behavior*, 78, 151-159.

Boonzaier, F. (2014). "Talking against dominance: South African women resisting dominant discourse in narratives of violence", in S. McKenzie-Mohr, M. N. Lafrance, S. McKenzie-Mohr, and M. N. Lafrance, (eds.), *Women Voicing Resistance: Discursive and Narrative Explorations*. New York, NY, US: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 102-120.

Bosch, J., Weaver, T. L., Arnold, L. D., and Clark, E. M. (2015). "The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Women's Physical Health: Findings From the Missouri Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System." *Journal Of Interpersonal Violence*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1177/0886260515599162.

Bostock, J., Plumpton, M., and Pratt, R. (2009). "Domestic violence against women: Understanding social processes and women's experiences." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 19(2), 95-110.

Bowstead, J. C. (2015). "Forced migration in the United Kingdom: women's journeys to escape domestic violence." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*(3), 307.

Bowstead, J. C. (2017). "Segmented journeys, fragmented lives: women's forced migration to escape domestic violence." *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 1(1), 45-60.

Bozon, M., and Heran, F. (1989). "Finding a Spouse: A Survey of how French Couples Meet." *Population: An English Selection*, 44(1), 91-121.

BPS. (2009). *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, Leicester: British Psychological Society.

BPS. (2014). *Code of Human Research Ethics*, Leicester: British Psychological Society.

Brandl, B. (2000). "Power and control: Understanding domestic abuse in later life." *Generations*, 24(2), 39-45.

Brandon, M., Sidebotham, P., Bailey, S., Belderson, P., Hawley, C., Ellis, C., and Megson, M. (2012). *New Learning from Serious Case Reviews: a Two Year Report for 2009-2011*. Department for Education, London.

Braun, V., and Clarke, Victoria. (2014). "What can 'thematic analysis' offer health and wellbeing researchers?" *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Wellbeing*, 9.

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006). "Using thematic analysis in psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful Qualitative Research*, London: Sage.

Brewer, D. D., Fleming, C. B., Haggerty, K. P., El-Bassel, N., Gilbert, L., Wu, E., Go, H., and Hill, J. (2005). "Past and future research on the crack cocaine-domestic violence link... El-Bassel N, Gilbert L, Wu E et al. Relationship between drug abuse and intimate partner violence: a longitudinal study among women receiving methadone. Am J Public Health. 2005;95:465-470." *American Journal of Public Health*, 95(9), 1493-1494.

Brewer, G., Bennett, C., Davidson, L., Ireen, A., Phipps, A.-J., Stewart-Wilkes, D., and Wilson, B. (2018). "Dark triad traits and romantic relationship attachment, accommodation, and control." *Personality and Individual Differences*, 120, 202-208.

Brinkmann, S., and Kvale, S. (2008). "Ethics in Qualitative Psychological Research", in C. Willig and W. Stainton-Rogers, (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London: Sage, pp. 263-279.

Britain, G. (1998). *Data Protection Act*, London: Stationery Office.

Brooks, A. (2016). "Oprah Winfrey: A Rags to Riches Story". Unibooks.

Broughton, S., and Ford-Gilboe, M. (2016). "Predicting Family Health and Well-Being After Separation from an Abusive Partner: Role of Coercive Control, Mother's Depression and Social Support." *Journal Of Clinical Nursing*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/jocn.13458.

Browne, K. (2005). "Snowball sampling: using social networks to research non-heterosexual women." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), 47-60.

Brownmiller, S. (1975). *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Brownmiller, S. (1999). *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution*, New York: Dell.

Buchanan, F., Power, C., and Verity, F. (2014). "The Effects of Domestic Violence on the Formation of Relationships Between Women and Their Babies: “I Was Too Busy Protecting My Baby to Attach”." *Journal of Family Violence*, 29(7), 713-724.

Bufacchi, V., and Gilson, J. (2016). "The ripples of violence." *Feminist Review*, 112(1), 27-40.

Buitelaar, N. J. L., Posthumus, J. A., Scholing, A., and Buitelaar, J. K. (2014). "Impact of treatment of ADHD on intimate partner violence (ITAP), a study protocol." *BMC Psychiatry*, 14(1), 336-344.

Buller, A. M., Hidrobo, M., Peterman, A., and Heise, L. (2016). "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach?: a mixed methods study on causal mechanisms through which cash and in-kind food transfers decreased intimate partner violence." *BMC Public Health*, 16(1), 1-13.

Burgess, A. W., Baker, T., Greening, D., Hartman, C. R., Burgess, A. G., Douglas, J. E., and Halloran, R. (1997). "Stalking Behaviors Within Domestic Violence." *Journal of Family Violence*, 12(4), 389-403.

Burkitt, K. H., and Larkin, G. L. (2008). "The Transtheoretical Model in Intimate Partner Violence Victimization: Stage Changes Over Time." *Violence & Victims*, 23(4), 411-431.

Burman, E. (1998). "Deconstructing feminist psychology", in E. Burman, (ed.), *Deconstructing Feminist Psychology*. London: Routledge.

Burman, E., and Chantler, K. (2005). "Domestic violence and minoritisation: Legal and policy barriers facing minoritized women leaving violent relationships." *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 28(1), 59-74.

Burman, E., Smailes, S. L., and Chantler, K. (2004). "'Culture' as a barrier to service provision and delivery: domestic violence services for minoritized women." *Critical Social Policy*, 24(3), 332-357.

Burr, V. (2015). *Social Constructionism (3rd Edition)*, Hove: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge.

Buzawa, E., Hotaling, G., T, and Byrne, J. (2007). "Understanding the Impact of Prior Abuse and Prior Victimization on the Decision to Forego Criminal Justice Assistance in

Domestic Violence Incidents: A Life-Course Perspective." *Brief Treatment & Crisis Intervention*, 7(1), 55-76.
Byford, J. (2014). "Remembering Jasenovac: Survivor Testimonies and the Cultural Dimension of Bearing Witness." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies (Project Muse)*, 28(1), 58-84.
Callaghan, J. (2015). "Mothers and Children? Representations of mothers in research on children's outcomes in domestic violence." *Psychology of Women Section Review*, 17, 13-20.
Callaghan, J. E. M., Alexander, J. H., Sixsmith, J., and Fellin, L. C. (2015). "Beyond "Witnessing": Children's Experiences of Coercive Control in Domestic Violence and Abuse." *Journal Of Interpersonal Violence*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1177/0886260515618946.
Cameron, D. (1992). *Feminism and Linguistic Theory (2nd Edn.)*, London: Macmillan.
Cameron, D. (1998). "'Is there any ketchup, Vera?': gender, power and pragmatics." *Discourse & Society*, 9(4), 437-455.
Campbell, E. (2017). "How Domestic Violence Batterers Use Custody Proceedings in Family Courts to Abuse Victims, and How Courts Can Put a Stop to It." *UCLA Women's Law Journal*, 24(1), 41.
Campbell, J., Jones, A. S., Dienemann, J., Kub, J., Schollenberger, J., O'Campo, P., Gielen, A. C., and Wynne, C. (2002). "Intimate Partner Violence and Physical Health Consequences." *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 162(10), 1157-1163.
Campbell, J., Laughon, K., and Woods, A. (2006). "Impact of intimate partner abuse on physical and mental health: how does it present in clinical practice?", in G. Roberts, K. Hegarty, and G. Feder, (eds.), *Intimate Partner Abuse and Health Professionals: New Approaches to Domestic Violence*. New York: Elsevier.
Campbell, J. C. (1992). ""If I can't have you, no one can": Power and control in homicide of female partners", in J. Radford and D. E. H. Russell, (eds.), *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*. New York: Twayne Publishers.
Campbell, J. C., Glass, N., Sharps, P. W., Laughon, K., and Bloom, T. (2007). "Intimate Partner Homicide: Review and Implications of Research and Policy." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 8(3), 246-269.
Campbell, R., Wasco, S. M., Bond, M. A., Hill, J., Mulvey, A., and Terenzio, M. (2000). "Feminist approaches to social science: Epistemological and methodological tenets." *Feminism and community psychology. Part II*(6), 773.
Carlen, P., and Worrall, A. (1987). "Gender, Crime and Justice". Open University Press: Buckingham.
Carman, D. (2002). *No Ordinary Man: A Life of George Carman*, London: Hodder and Stoughton.
Casanueva, C. L., Martin, S. L., Runyan, D. K., Barth, R. P., and Bradley, R. H. (2008). "Quality of maternal parenting among intimate-partner violence victims involved with the child welfare system." *Journal of Family Violence*, 23(6), 413-427.
Cerulli, C., Talbot, N. L., Tang, W., and Chaudron, L. H. (2011). "Co-Occurring Intimate Partner Violence and Mental Health Diagnoses in Perinatal Women." *Journal of Women's Health (15409996)*, 20(12), 1797-1803.
Chérrez-Bermejo, C., and Alás-Brun, R. (2014). "[A descriptive study of substance abuse and mental health disorders in intimate partner violence abusers in prison]." *Revista Española De Sanidad Penitenciaria*, 16(2), 29-37.

Chin, K., Atkinson, B. E., Raheb, H., Harris, E., and Vernon, P. A. (2017). "The dark side of romantic jealousy." *Personality and Individual Differences*, 115, 23-29.
Choe, J. Y., Teplin, L. A., and Abram, K. M. (2008). "Perpetration of violence, violent victimization, and severe mental illness: balancing public health concerns." *Psychiatric Services*, 59(2), 153-164 12p.
Chuang, C., Cattoi, A., McCall-Hosenfeld, J., Camacho, F., Dyer, A.-M., and Weisman, C. (2012). "Longitudinal association of intimate partner violence and depressive symptoms." *Mental Health in Family Medicine*, 9(2), 107-114.
Chung, D. (2007). "Making meaning of relationships: Young women's experiences and understandings of dating violence." *Violence Against Women*, 13(12), 1274-1295.
Clandinin, D. J., and Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, San Fransisco, CA: John Wiley.
Clark, C., Shahrouri, M., Halasa, L., Khalaf, I., Spencer, R., and Everson-Rose, S. (2012). "A Mixed Methods Study of Participant Reaction to Domestic Violence Research in Jordan." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 27(9), 1655-1676.
Clarke, J. A. (2011). "Beyond Equality? Against the Universal Turn in Workplace Protections." *Indiana Law Journal*, 86(4), 1219-1287.
Clarke, V., Braun, V., and Wooles, K. (2015). "Thou Shalt Not Covet Another Man? Exploring Constructions of Same-Sex and Different-Sex Infidelity Using Story Completion." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 25(2), 153-166.
Cohen, L., Morrison, K., and Manion, L. (2007). *Research Methods in Education*, London: Taylor & Francis Routledge.
Coleman, V. E. (2003). "Treating the Lesbian Batterer: Theoretical and Clinical Considerations-- A Contemporary Psychoanalytic Perspective." *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 7(1/2), 159-205.
College of Policing. (2013). *Responding to child sexual exploitation*. College of Policing, London.
College of Policing. (2016). *Understanding risk and vulnerability in the context of domestic abuse.* [online] Available at: https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/domestic-abuse/risk-and-vulnerability/ (Accessed: 22 August 2016).
Condon, L., Hekb, G., and Harrisa, F. (2008). "Choosing health in prison: Prisoners' views on making healthy choices in English prisons." *Health Education Journal*, 67(3), 155-166.
Connolly, K., and Reilly, R. C. (2007). "Emergent Issues When Researching Trauma: A Confessional Tale." *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(4), 522-540.
Conti, J., and O'Neil, M. (2007). "Studying power: qualitative methods and the global elite." *Qualitative Research*, 7(1), 63-82.
Cooley, C. H. (1983). *Human Nature and the Social Order*, New Jersey, USA: Transaction.
Copel, L., and Al-Mamari, K. (2016). "Self-Stigma in Women with Disabilities Who have Experienced Intimate Partner Violence." *Nursing Research*, 65(2), E108-E108.
Corradi, C., and Stöckl, H. (2014). "Intimate partner homicide in 10 European countries: Statistical data and policy development in a cross-national perspective." *European Journal of Criminology*, 11(5), 601-618.
Corvo, K., and Carpenter, E. H. (2000). "Effects of Parental Substance Abuse on Current Levels of Domestic Violence: A Possible Elaboration of Intergenerational Transmission Processes." *Journal of Family Violence*, 15(2), 123-135.

Corvo, K., Halpern, J., and Ferraro, F. R. (2006). "Frontal Lobe Deficits and Alcohol Abuse: Possible Interactions in Predicting Domestic Violence." *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 13(2), 49-63.

Cotterill, P., and Letherby, G. (1993). "Weaving Stories: Personal Auto/Biographies in Feminist Research." *Sociology*, 27(1), 67-79.

Council of Europe. (2011). *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*: Council of Europe.

Cowan, G., and Mills, R. D. (2004). "Personal Inadequacy and Intimacy Predictors of Men's Hostility Toward Women." *Sex Roles*, 51(1/2), 67-78.

Cozzolino, B. (2014). "Other "Second Assaults": How Institutions Fail Separated Mothers with Domestic Violence Histories." *Conference Papers -- American Sociological Association*, 1-18.

CPS. (2016). *Violence Against Women and Girls: Crime Report 2015-16*. Crown Prosecution Service, London.

CPS. (2017). *Violence Against Women and Girls Report: Tenth Edition (2016-17)*. Crown Prosecution Service, London.

Crenshaw, K. (2005). "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color (1994)", *Violence against women: Classic papers.* Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson Education New Zealand, pp. 282-313.

Crenshaw, K. W. (2012). "From Private Violence to Mass Incarceration: Thinking Intersectionally About Women, Race, and Social Control." *UCLA Law Review*, 59(6), 1418-1472.

Crossman, K. A., Hardesty, J. L., and Raffaelli, M. (2016). ""He Could Scare Me Without Laying a Hand on Me": Mothers' Experiences of Nonviolent Coercive Control During Marriage and After Separation." *Violence Against Women*, 22(4), 454-473.

Crowne, S. S., Juon, H.-S., Ensminger, M., Burrell, L., McFarlane, E., and Duggan, A. (2011). "Concurrent and long-term impact of intimate partner violence on employment stability." *Journal Of Interpersonal Violence*, 26(6), 1282-1304.

Cunradi, C. B., Caetano, R., Clark, C., and Schafer, J. (2000). "Neighborhood Poverty as a Predictor of Intimate Partner Violence Among White, Black, and Hispanic Couples in the United States." *Annals of Epidemiology*, 10(5), 297-308.

Cunradi, C. B., Caetano, R., and Schafer, J. (2002). "Socioeconomic Predictors of Intimate Partner Violence Among White, Black, and Hispanic Couples in the United States." *Journal of Family Violence*, 17(4), 377-389.

Dalton, B. (2009). "Batterer Program Directors' Views on Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence." *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 18(3), 248-260.

Daly, M., and Wilson, M. (1988). "Evolutionary social psychology and family homicide." *Science*, 242(4878), 519-524.

Danis, F. S., and Lockhart, L. (2003). "Domestic Violence and Social Work Education: What Do We Know, What Do We Need to Know?" *Journal of Social Work Education*, 39(2), 215.

Davies, C., and Khomami, N. (2017). "Harvey Weinstein: a list of the women who have accused him"*The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media Ltd.: London.

Davison, J. (2007). "Alcohol misuse: contributor to and consequence of violence against women." *Diversity in Health and Social Care*, 4(2), 137-148.

de Beaumont, J.-M. L. P. (2015). *Beauty and the Beast*: www.the-planet-books.com.

Deith, J. (2012). *What drives a man to kill himself and his family?* [online] Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-17097802 (Accessed: 1st June 2015).
Delamont, S. (2012). "Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education". Edward Elgar Publishing: Cheltenham.
Denzin, N. K., and Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). "The discipline and practice of qualitative research", in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, (eds.), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
Desmarais, S. L., Van Dorn, R. A., Johnson, K. L., Grimm, K. J., Douglas, K. S., and Swartz, M. S. (2014). "Community Violence Perpetration and Victimization Among Adults With Mental Illnesses." *American Journal of Public Health*, 104(12), 2342-2349.
Devoe, E., and Smith, E. (2003). "Don't Take My Kids." *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 3(3-4), 277-294.
Devries, K. M., Child, J. C., Bacchus, L. J., Mak, J., Falder, G., Graham, K., Watts, C., and Heise, L. (2014). "Intimate partner violence victimization and alcohol consumption in women: a systematic review and meta-analysis." *Addiction*, 109(3), 379-391.
Dimond, J. P., Fiesler, C., and Bruckman, A. S. (2011). "Domestic violence and information communication technologies." *Interacting with Computers*, 23, 413-421.
Dobash, R., Emerson, and Dobash, R. P. (1998). "Rethinking Violence Against Women". London: Sage.
Dobash, R. E., and Dobash, R., P. (2015). *When Men Murder Women*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Dobash, R. E., and Dobash, R. P. (1992). *Women, Violence and Social Change*, New York: Routledge.
Dobash, R. P., Dobash, R. E., Wilson, M., and Daly, M. (1992). "The myth of sexual symmetry in marital violence." *Social Problems*, 39(1), 71-91.
DoH. (2005). *Responding to Domestic Abuse: A Handbook for Health Professionals*. Department of Health, London.
Donovan, C., Hester, M., Holmes, J., and McCarry, M. (2006). *Comparing Domestic Abuse in Same Sex and Heterosexual Relationships*. Universities of Sunderland and Bristol.
Dorpat, T. (2006). *Covert Methods of Interpersonal Control*, New York: Other Press.
Dorpat, T., L. (1994). "On the double whammy and gaslighting." *Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy*, 11(1), 91-96.
Downes, J., Kelly, L., and Westmarland, N. (2014). "Ethics in Violence and Abuse Research - a Positive Empowerment Approach." *Sociological Research Online*, 19(1), 2.
Dryden, C. (1999). *Being Married, Doing Gender*, London: Routledge.
Du Mont, J., and Forte, T. (2014). "Intimate partner violence among women with mental health-related activity limitations: a Canadian population based study." *BMC Public Health*, 14(1), 1-16.
Dutton, D. G. (1994). "Patriarchy and wife assault: The ecological fallacy." *Violence and Victims*, 9(2), 167-182.
Dutton, D. G. (2007). *The Abusive Personality: Violence and Control in Intimate Relationships (2nd Edn.)*, New York: Guilford Press.
Easton, M. The “Lady Scientist:” Gender and Power in the Research Relationship. 2005/08/13 Annual Meeting, Philadelphia. American Sociological Association.
Eckhardt, C. I., Parrott, D. J., and Sprunger, J. G. (2015). "Mechanisms of Alcohol-Facilitated Intimate Partner Violence." *Violence Against Women*, 21(8), 939-957 19p.

Edwards, K. M., Dixon, K. J., Gidycz, C. A., and Desai, A. D. (2014). "Family-of-origin violence and college men's reports of intimate partner violence perpetration in adolescence and young adulthood: The role of maladaptive interpersonal patterns." *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 15(2), 234-240.

Edwards, K. M., and Sylaska, K. M. (2015). "Reactions to Participating in Intimate Partner Violence and Minority Stress Research: A Mixed Methodological Study of Self-Identified Lesbian and Gay Emerging Adults." *Journal Of Sex Research*, 1-11.

Ehrenreich, B., and English, D. (2005). *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts' Advice to Women*, New York: Random House.

Eisenberg, L. (2005). "Violence and the Mentally Ill: Victims, Not Perpetrators." *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62(8), 825-826.

El-Bassel, N., Gilbert, L., Wu, E., Go, H., and Hill, J. (2005). "Relationship Between Drug Abuse and Intimate Partner Violence: A Longitudinal Study Among Women Receiving Methadone." *American Journal of Public Health*, 95(3), 465-470.

Elizabeth, V., Gavey, N., and Tolmie, J. (2010). "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Resident Mothers and the Moral Dilemmas they Face During Custody Disputes." *Feminist Legal Studies*, 18(3), 253-274.

Elizabeth, V., Gavey, N., and Tolmie, J. (2012a). "The Gendered Dynamics of Power in Disputes Over the Postseparation Care of Children." *Violence Against Women*, 18(4), 459-481 23p.

Elizabeth, V., Gavey, N., and Tolmie, J. (2012b). "'. . . He's just swapped his fists for the system' the governance of gender through custody law." *Gender & Society*, 26(2), 239-260.

Elliott, J. (2005). *Using Narrative in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, London: Sage.

Enander, V. (2008). "Women Leaving Violent Men: Crossroads of Emotion, Cognition and Action". University of Gothenburg: Gothenburg.

Ernst, A. A., Weiss, S. J., and Enright-Smith, S. (2006). "Child witnesses and victims in homes with adult intimate partner violence." *Academic Emergency Medicine: Official Journal Of The Society For Academic Emergency Medicine*, 13(6), 696-699.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights FRA. (2014). *Violence against women: an EU-wide survey*. Vienna, Austria: FRA.

Evans, I., and Lindsay, J. (2008). "Incorporation rather than recovery: Living with the legacy of domestic violence." *Women's Studies International Forum*, 31(5), 355-362.

Evans, M. A., and Feder, G. S. (2016). "Help-seeking amongst women survivors of domestic violence: a qualitative study of pathways towards formal and informal support." *Health Expectations: An International Journal Of Public Participation In Health Care And Health Policy*, 19(1), 62-73.

Falbo, T., and Peplau, L., A. (1980). "Power strategies in intimate relationships." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38(4), 618-628.

Fassinger, R., and Morrow, S. L. (2013). "Toward Best Practices in Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed- Method Research: A Social Justice Perspective." *Journal for Social Action in Counseling & Psychology*, 5(2), 69-83.

Featherstone, B. (2003). "Taking Fathers Seriously." *British Journal of Social Work*, 33(2), 239-254.

Featherstone, B., and Fraser, C. (2012). "Working with fathers around domestic violence: contemporary debates." *Child Abuse Review*, 21, 256-263.

Featherstone, B., and Peckover, S. (2007). "Letting them get away with it: fathers, domestic violence and child welfare." *Critical Social Policy*, 27(2), 181-202.
Feingold, A., Washburn, I., Tiberio, S., and Capaldi, D. (2015). "Changes in the Associations of Heavy Drinking and Drug Use with Intimate Partner Violence in Early Adulthood." *Journal of Family Violence*, 30(1), 27-34.
Ferraro, K. J. (1996). "The Dance of Dependency: A Genealogy of Domestic Violence Discourse." *Hypatia*, 11(4), 77-91.
Ferreira, M. d. F., Moraes, C. L. d., Reichenheim, M. E., Verly Junior, E., Marques, E. S., and Salles-Costa, R. (2015). "Effect of physical intimate partner violence on body mass index in low-income adult women." *Cadernos De Saúde Pública*, 31(1), 161-172.
Fischer, A. H., and Manstead, A. S. R. (2000). *The relation between gender and emotion in different cultures*, United Kingdom, Europe: Cambridge University Press.
Fitzgerald, L. F., and Ormerod, A. J. (1993). "Breaking silence: The sexual harassment of women in academia and the workplace", in F. L. Denmark, M. A. Paludi, F. L. Denmark, and M. A. Paludi, (eds.), *Psychology of women: A handbook of issues and theories.* Westport, CT, US: Greenwood Press/Greenwood Publishing Group, pp. 553-581.
Flanagan, J. C., Jaquier, V., Overstreet, N., Swan, S. C., and Sullivan, T. P. (2014). "The mediating role of avoidance coping between intimate partner violence (IPV) victimization, mental health, and substance abuse among women experiencing bidirectional IPV." *Psychiatry Research*, 220(1–2), 391-396.
Flexon, J. L., Meldrum, R. C., Young, J. T. N., and Lehmann, P. S. (2016). "Low self-control and the Dark Triad: Disentangling the predictive power of personality traits on young adult substance use, offending and victimization." *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 46, 159-169.
Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research (4th ed.)*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.
Fogarty, C. T., Fredman, L., Heeren, T. C., and Liebschutz, J. (2008). "Synergistic effects of child abuse and intimate partner violence on depressive symptoms in women." *Preventive Medicine: An International Journal Devoted to Practice and Theory*, 46(5), 463-469.
Fontana, A., and Frey, J., H. (1994). "Interviewing: The Art of Science", in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage, pp. 361-376.
Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison. (Trans A. Sheridan)*, Oxford, England: Vintage.
Foucault, M. (1998). *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*, London: Penguin.
Fowler, D. N. (2009). "Screening for Co-Occurring Intimate Partner Abuse and Substance Abuse: Challenges Across Service Delivery Systems." *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, 9(3), 318-339.
Franklin, C., and Kercher, G. (2012). "The Intergenerational Transmission of Intimate Partner Violence: Differentiating Correlates in a Random Community Sample." *Journal of Family Violence*, 27(3), 187-199.
Freud, S. (1991). *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, London: Penguin.
Friese, S. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis with Atlas.ti (2nd Edn)*, London: Sage.
Gaisford, T. (2013). "Choice in controlling relationships." *The Psychologist*, 26(7), 473.
Galvani, S. (2012). *Supporting People with Alcohol and Drug Problems: Making a Difference*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Garbarino, J., and Abramowitz, R., H. (2009). "Sociocultural risk and opportunity", in J. Garbarino, (ed.), *Children and Families in the Social Environment (2nd Edn.)*. New York: Walter de Gruyter.
Gass, G., Zemon;, and Nichols, W., C. (1988). "Gaslighting: A marital syndrome." *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 10(1), 3-16.
Gavey, N. (1993). "Technologies and Effects of Heterosexual Coercion", in S. Wilkinson and C. Kitzinger, (eds.), *Heterosexuality: A Feminism and Psychology Reader*. London: Sage, pp. 93-117.
Gavey, N. (2005). *Just Sex? The Cultural Scaffolding of Rape*, Hove: Routledge.
Gavey, N. (2011). "Feminist Poststructuralism and Discourse Analysis Revisited." *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 35(1), 183-188.
Gayle, D. (2015). "Chadwell Heath killings: police confirm mother and daughters were strangled"*The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media: London.
Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books.
Gergen, K. J. (1991). *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life*, New York: Basic Books.
Gergen, K. J. (2009). *An Invitation to Social Constructionism*, London: Sage.
Gibbons, P., Collins, M., and Reid, C. (2011). "How useful are indices of personality pathology when assessing domestic violence perpetrators?" *Psychological Assessment*, 23(1), 164-173.
Gibson, C. (1998). "Semi-structured and unstructured interviewing: a comparison of methodologies in research." *Journal of Psychiatric & Mental Health Nursing*, 5(6), 469.
Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York: Doubleday.
Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: notes on the management of spoiled identity*, London: Penguin.
Goffman, E. (1968). *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, London: Penguin.
Goffman, E. (1972). *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Goldson, B., and Muncie, J. (2015). "Youth Crime and Justice (2nd Edn.)". Sage: London.
González Cases, J., Polo Usaola, C., González Aguado, F., López Gironés, M., Rullas Trincado, M., and Fernández Liria, A. (2014). "Prevalence and Characteristics of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women with Severe Mental Illness: A Prevalence Study in Spain." *Community Mental Health Journal*, 50(7), 841-847 7p.
Goodmark, L. (2010). "Mothers, domestic violence, and child protection: An American legal perspective." *Violence Against Women*, 16(5), 524-529.
Gottman, J. M. (2001). "Crime, hostility, wife battering, and the heart: On the Meehan et al. (2001) failure to replicate the Gottman et al. (1995) typology." *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(3), 409-414.
Gov.UK. (2013). *Definition: Domestic Violence and Abuse.* [online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse (Accessed: 19 August 2015).
Grand, H. T. (1982). "The uncommitted male and his female counterpart." *American Journal Of Psychoanalysis*, 42(4), 283-292.
Greenspan, H. (1998). *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History*, Westport, CT: Praeger.
Greenspan, H., and Bolkosky, S. (2006). "When Is an Interview an Interview? Notes from Listening to Holocaust Survivors." *Poetics Today*, 27(2), 431-449.

Gregory, J., and Lees, S. (1999). "Policing sexual assault". Taylor & Francis Ltd / Books, pp. 1-1.
Gregory, M. (2011). "Masculinity and homicide-suicide." *International Journal of Law Crime and Justice*, 40(3), 133-151.
Gregory, M., and Milroy, C. (2010). "Homicide and suicide in Yorkshire and the Humber: 1975-1992 and 1993-2007." *The American Journal Of Forensic Medicine And Pathology*, 31(1), 58-63.
Grierson, J. (2018). "Council funding for women's refuges cut by nearly £7m since 2010". *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media Limited: London.
Griffiths, S. (2000). "Women, anger and domestic violence: The implications for legal defences to murder", in J. Hanmer and C. Itzin, (eds.), *Home Truths About Domestic Violence: Feminist Influences on Policy and Practice*. London: Routledge, pp. 133-152.
Grihom, M. J. (2015). "Pourquoi le silence des femmes? Violence sexuelle et lien de couple. = Why the silence? Sexual and gender-based violence and relationships within the couple." *Dialogue: Recherches sur le couple et la famille*, 208, 71-84.
Grumet, G. W. (1967). "Marital syndromes encountered in a court psychiatric clinic." *Psychiatric Quarterly Supplement*, 41(1), 162-171.
Guardian. (2012). "Dennis Waterman accused of trivialising violence against ex-wife". The *Guardian*, 20th March.
Guardian. (2015a). "Anorexia and rape are men's problems too". *The Guardian, 2nd July*.
Guardian. (2015b). "Gender is all too relevant in violence statistics". *The Guardian, 7th July*.
Gubrium, J. F., Holstein, J. A., Marvasti, A. B., and McKinney, K. D. (2012). "The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft". Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.
Guest, G., Bunce, A., and Johnson, L. (2006). "How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability." *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82.
Guy, J. (2014). *Early Intervention in Domestic Violence and Abuse*, London: Early Intervention Foundation.
Haaken, J., Fussell, H., and Mankowski, E. (2007). "Bringing the church to its knees: evangelical Christianity, feminism, and domestic violence discourse." *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 5(2), 103-115.
Haglund, K. (2004). "Conducting Life History Research With Adolescents." *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(9), 1309-1319.
Hahn, J., Aldarondo, E., Silverman, J., McCormick, M., and Koenen, K. (2015). "Examining the Association between Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration." *Journal of Family Violence*, 30(6), 743-752.
Hajjar, L. (2004). "Religion, State Power, and Domestic Violence in Muslim Societies: A Framework for Comparative Analysis." *Law & Social Inquiry*, 29(1), 1-38.
Hale, H. (2008). "The Development of British Military Masculinities through Symbolic Resources." *Culture & Psychology*, 14(3), 305-332.
Hanmer, J., and Griffiths, S. (2000). "Policing repeated domestic violence by men: A new approach", in J. Hanmer and C. Itzin, (eds.), *Home Truiths About Domestic Vioolence: Feminist Influences on Policy and Practice*. London: Routledge, pp. 323-339.
Hanmer, J., and Itzin, C. (2000). "Home Truths About Domestic Violence: Feminist Influences on Policy and Practice". Routledge: London.
Happonen, T. (2017). *Making the political personal: how psychology undermines feminist activism.* [online] Available at:

http://www.feministcurrent.com/2017/12/21/making-political-personal-psychology-undermines-feminist-activism/ (Accessed: 21 December 2017).
Harne, L. (2011). *Violent Fathering and the Risks to Children*, Bristol: Policy Press.
Harne, L., and Radford, J. (2008). *Tackling Domestic Violence: Theories, Policies and Practice*, Maidenhead: McGraw Hill.
Harris, C. R. (2003). "A review of sex differences in sexual jealousy, including self-report data, psychophysiological responses, interpersonal violence, and morbid jealousy." *Personality And Social Psychology Review: An Official Journal Of The Society For Personality And Social Psychology, Inc*, 7(2), 102-128.
Harvey, L., and Gill, R. (2011). "Spicing It Up: Sexual Entrepreneurs and The Sex Inspectors", in R. Gill and C. Scharff, (eds.), *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 52-67.
Hatcher, A. M., Stöckl, H., Christofides, N., Woollett, N., Pallitto, C. C., Garcia-Moreno, C., and Turan, J. M. (2016). "Mechanisms linking intimate partner violence and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV: A qualitative study in South Africa." *Social Science & Medicine*, 168, 130-139.
Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., and Halliwell, E. (2014). "Bisexual women's understandings of social marginalisation: 'The heterosexuals don't understand us but nor do the lesbians'." *Feminism & Psychology*, 24(3), 352-372.
Hegarty, K. (2011). "Domestic violence: the hidden epidemic associated with mental illness." *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 198(3), 169-170.
Hegarty, K., O'Doherty, L., Chondros, P., Valpied, J., Taft, A., Astbury, J., Brown, S., Gold, L., Taket, A., Feder, G., and Gunn, J. (2013). "Effect of Type and Severity of Intimate Partner Violence on Women's Health and Service Use." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 28(2), 273-294.
Heidari, E., Dickson, C., Newton, T., and Dickinson, C. (2014). "An overview of the prison population and the general health status of prisoners." *British Dental Journal*, 217(1), 15-19.
Henriques, H., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C., and Walkerdine, V. (1998). *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity*: London: Routledge.
Hester, M. (2011). "The Three Planet Model: Towards an Understanding of Contradictions in Approaches to Women and Children's Safety in Contexts of Domestic Violence." *British Journal of Social Work*, 41(5), 837-853.
Hester, M. (2013). "Who does what to whom? Gender and domestic violence perpetrators in English police records." *European Journal of Criminology*, 10(5), 623-637.
Hester, M., Pearson, C., and Harwin, N. (2007). *Making an impact: children and domestic violence: a reader (Second Edition)*, London: Jessica Kingsley.
HMIC. (2014). *Everyone's Business: Improving the Police Response to Domestic Abuse*. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies, London.
HMIC. (2015). *Bedfordshire Police's Approach to Tackling Domestic Abuse*. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies, London.
Hollway, W. (1995). "Feminist discourses and women's heterosexual desire", in S. Wilkinson, C. Kitzinger, S. Wilkinson, and C. Kitzinger, (eds.), *Feminism and discourse: Psychological perspectives.* Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc, pp. 86-105.
Hollway, W., and Jefferson, T. (2000). *Doing Qualitative Research Differently: Free Association, Narrative and the Interview Method*, London: Sage.

Holmes, M. R. (2015). "Physical and sexual intimate partner violence negatively affects women's mental health and their children's behaviour." *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 18(3), 94-94.
Holmila, M., Beccaria, F., Ibanga, A., Graham, K., Hettige, S., Magri, R., Munn, M., Plant, M., Rolando, S., and Tumwesigye, N. (2014). "Gender, alcohol and intimate partner violence: Qualitative comparative study." *Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy*, 21(5), 398-407.
Holt, S. (2011). "Domestic Abuse and Child Contact: Positioning Children in the Decision-making Process." *Child Care in Practice*, 17(4), 327-346.
Holt, S. (2015). "Post-separation Fathering and Domestic Abuse: Challenges and Contradictions." *Child Abuse Review*, 24(3), 210-222 13p.
Holt, S. (2016). "Domestic Violence and the Paradox of Post-Separation Mothering." *British Journal of Social Work*.
Holtzworth-Munroe, A., and Stuart, G. L. (1994). "Typologies of male batterers: Three subtypes and the differences among them." *Psychological Bulletin*, 116(3), 476-497.
Hornstein, G. A. (2013). "Whose account matters? A challenge to feminist psychologists." *Feminism and Psychology*, 23(1), 29-40.
Huang, C.-C., Vikse, J., Lu, S., and Yi, S. (2015). "Children's Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence and Early Delinquency." *Journal of Family Violence*, 30(8), 953-965.
Humphreys, C., and Absler, D. (2011). "History repeating: child protection responses to domestic violence." *Child & Family Social Work*, 16(4), 464-473.
Humphreys, C., and Bradbury-Jones, C. (2015). "Domestic abuse and safeguarding children: Focus, response and intervention." *Child Abuse Review*, 24(4), 231-234.
Humphreys, C., and Mullender, A. (2002). *Children and Domestic Violence: A research overview of the impact on children*, Totnes: Research in Practice.
Humphreys, C., and Stanley, N. (2006). "Domestic Violence and Child Protection: Directions for Good Practice". London: Jessica Kingsley.
Humphreys, C., and Thiara, R. K. (2002). *Routes to Safety: Protection Issues Facing Abused Women and Children and the Role of Outreach Services*, Bristol: Women's Aid Federation of England.
Humphreys, C., and Thiara, R. K. (2003). "Neither justice nor protection: women's experiences of post-separation violence." *Journal of Social Welfare & Family Law*, 25(3), 195-214.
Hydén, M. (2014). "The teller-focused interview: Interviewing as a relational practice." *Qualitative Social Work*, 13(6), 795-812.
Ijeoma, N., Ogbonnaya, and Shenyang, G. (2013). "Effect of Domestic Violence on the Risk of Out-of-Home Placement: A Propensity Score Analysis." *Journal of the Society for Social Work & Research*, 4(3), 198-213.
Ingvarsdotter, K., Johnsdotter, S., and Östman, M. (2012). "Lost in interpretation: The use of interpreters in research on mental ill health." *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 58(1), 34-40.
Island, D., and Lettelier, P. (1991). *Men Who Beat the Men Who Love Them: Battered Gay Men & Domestic Violence*. Binghampton, NY: The Haworth Press.
Itzin, C., Bailey, S., and Bentovim, A. (2008). "The effects of domestic violence and sexual abuse on mental health." *Psychiatric Bulletin*, 32(12), 448-450.

Jackson, C. (2002). "Can Single-sex Classes in Co-educational Schools Enhance the Learning Experiences of Girls and/or Boys? An Exploration of Pupils' Perceptions." *British Educational Research Journal*, 28(1), 37-48.

Jaffe, P. G., Crooks, C. V., and Poisson, S. E. (2003). "Common Misconceptions in Addressing Domestic Violence in Child Custody Disputes". *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, Fall 2003 pp. 57-67.

Jaggar, A. M. (2004). "Feminist politics and epistemology: The standpoint of women", in S. G. Harding, (ed.), *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*. London: Routledge.

Javaid, A. (2015). "The role of alcohol in intimate partner violence: Causal behaviour or excusing behaviour?" *British Journal of Community Justice*, 13(1), 75-91.

Jefferson, G. (2004). "Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction", in G. H. Lerner, (ed.), *Conversation Analysis: Studies from the First Generation*. Amsterdam: John Betjemins, pp. 13-31.

Jervis, S. (2011). *Relocation, Gender and Emotion: A Psycho-social Perspective on the Experiences of Military Wives*, London: Karnac.

Jewkes, R. (2002). "Intimate partner violence: causes and prevention." *The Lancet*, 359(9315), 1423-1429.

Johnson, M. P. (2004). "Patriarchal Terrorism and Common Couple Violence: Two Forms of Violence Against Women", in H. T. Reis, C. E. Rusbult, H. T. Reis, and C. E. Rusbult, (eds.), *Close relationships: Key readings.* Philadelphia, PA, US: Taylor & Francis, pp. 471-482.

Johnson, M. P. (2006). "Conflict and control: gender symmetry and asymmetry in domestic violence." *Violence Against Women*, 12(11), 1003-1018.

Johnson, M. P. (2008). *A Typology of Domestic Violence: Intimate Terrorism, Violent Resistance, and Situational Couple Violence*, Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press.

Johnson, M. P., and Ferraro, K. J. (2000). "Research on domestic violence in the 1990s: making distinctions." *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 62(4), 948-963.

Jonason, P. K., Abboud, R., Tomé, J., Dummett, M., and Hazer, A. (2017). "The Dark Triad traits and individual differences in self-reported and other-rated creativity." *Personality and Individual Differences*, 117, 150-154.

Jones, D. N. (2014). "Risk in the face of retribution: Psychopathic individuals persist in financial misbehavior among the Dark Triad." *Personality and Individual Differences*, 67, 109-113.

Jorm, A. F., and Reavley, N. J. (2014). "Public belief that mentally ill people are violent: Is the USA exporting stigma to the rest of the world?" *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 48(3), 213-215.

Kadianaki, I. (2014). "Conceptualizing the mediating role of power asymmetries in research communication: A social representations approach." *Culture and Psychology*, 20(3), 358-374.

Kail, B. L. (2010). "Motivating Women With Substance Abuse and Intimate Partner Violence." *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, 10(1), 25-43.

Kan, M. L., and Feinberg, M. E. (2015). "Impacts of a coparenting-focused intervention on links between pre-birth intimate partner violence and observed parenting." *Journal of Family Violence*, 30(3), 363-372.

Karakurt, G., Smith, D., and Whiting, J. (2014). "Impact of intimate partner violence on women's mental health." *Journal of Family Violence*, 29(7), 693-702.
Katz, E. (2015). "Domestic Violence, Children's Agency and Mother–Child Relationships: Towards a More Advanced Model." *Children and Society*, 29, 69-79.
Katz, E. (2016). "Beyond the Physical Incident Model: How Children Living with Domestic Violence are Harmed By and Resist Regimes of Coercive Control." *Child Abuse Review*, 25(1), 46-59.
Keeling, J., and Fisher, C. (2012). "Women's Early Relational Experiences That Lead to Domestic Violence." *Qualitative Health Research*, 22(11), 1559-1567.
Keeling, J., Smith, D., and Fisher, C. (2016). "A qualitative study exploring midlife women's stages of change from domestic violence towards freedom." *BMC Women's Health*, 16(12), 1-8.
Kelly, L. (1988). *Surviving Sexual Violence*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
Kelly, L., and Westmarland, N. (2016). "Naming and defining 'domestic violence': lessons from research with violent men." *Feminist Review*, 112(1), 113-127.
Kennedy, H. (2005). *Eve Was Framed: Women and British Justice*, London: Vintage.
Kerley, K., Xu, X., Sirisunyaluck, B., and Alley, J. (2010). "Exposure to Family Violence in Childhood and Intimate Partner Perpetration or Victimization in Adulthood: Exploring Intergenerational Transmission in Urban Thailand." *Journal of Family Violence*, 25(3), 337-347.
Khalifeh, H., Hargreaves, J., Howard, L. M., and Birdthistle, I. (2013). "Intimate Partner Violence and Socioeconomic Deprivation in England: Findings From a National Cross-Sectional Survey." *American Journal of Public Health*, 103(3), 462-472.
Khalifeh, H., Oram, S., Trevillion, K., Johnson, S., and Howard, L. M. (2015). "Recent intimate partner violence among people with chronic mental illness: findings from a national cross-sectional survey." *The British Journal Of Psychiatry: The Journal Of Mental Science*, 207(3), 207-212.
Kimmel, M. S. (2002). "'Gender symmetry' in domestic violence: a substantive and methodological research review." *Violence Against Women*, 8(11), 1332-1363 32p.
Kirkwood, C. (1993). *Leaving Abusive Partners: From the Scars of Survival to the Wisdom for Change*, London: Sage.
Kivisto, A., and Watson, M. (2015). "12-Month Prevalence, Trends, Gender Differences, and the Impact of Mental Health Services on Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration Among Discharged Psychiatric Inpatients." *Journal of Family Violence*(Preprints), 1-7.
Kocabiyik, N., Yildirim, S., Turgut, E. O., Turk, M. K., and Ayer, A. (2015). "A study on the frequency of violence to healthcare professionals in a mental health hospital and related factors." *Dusunen Adam: Journal of Psychiatry & Neurological Sciences*, 28(2), 112-118 7p.
Kuijpers, K., Van der Knaap, L., and Winkel, F. (2012). "Victims' Influence on Intimate Partner Violence Revictimization." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 27(9), 1716-1742.
Kurtz, D. L., Zavala, E., and Melander, L. A. (2015). "The Importance of Social Learning and Critical Incident Stressors on Police Officers' Perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence." *Victims & Offenders*, 10(1), 51-73.
La Flair, L. N., Bradshaw, C. P., Storr, C. L., Green, K. M., Alvanzo, A. A. H., and Crum, R. M. (2012). "Intimate Partner Violence and Patterns of Alcohol Abuse and Dependence Criteria Among Women: A Latent Class Analysis." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 73(3), 351-360.

Lacey, K., McPherson, M., Samuel, P., Powell Sears, K., and Head, D. (2013). "The Impact of Different Types of Intimate Partner Violence on the Mental and Physical Health of Women in Different Ethnic Groups." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 28(2), 359-385.

Lacey, K. K., Parnell, R., Mouzon, D. M., Matusko, N., Head, D., Abelson, J. M., and Jackson, J. S. (2015). "The mental health of US Black women: the roles of social context and severe intimate partner violence." *BMJ Open*, 5(10), 1-12.

Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and Women's Place*, New York: Harper and Row.

Lakoff, R. (1990). *Talking Power*, New York: Basic Books.

Langford, D. R. (2000). "Pearls, Pith and Provocation: Developing a Safety Protocol in Qualitative Research Involving Battered Women." *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(1), 133-142.

Lantrip, K., Luginbuhl, P., Chronister, K., and Lindstrom, L. (2015). "Broken Dreams: Impact of Partner Violence on the Career Development Process for Professional Women." *Journal of Family Violence*, 30(5), 591-605.

Lees, S. (2000). "Marital rape and marital murder", in J. Hanmer and C. Itzin, (eds.), *Home Truths about Domestic Violence: Feminist Influences on Policy and Practice*. London: Routledge, pp. 57-73.

Lehrner, A., and Allen, N. E. (2009). "Still a movement after all these years? Current tensions in the domestic violence movement." *Violence Against Women*, 15(6), 656-677.

Lemaitre Ripoll, J., García Jaramillo, S., and Ramírez Rodríguez, H. (2014). "Vivienda/violencia: intersecciones de la vivienda y la violencia intrafamiliar en Ciudad Bolívar, Bogotá." *Housing/Violence: Intersections of Housing and Domestic Violence in Ciudad Bolívar, Bogota.*(50), 71-86.

Leonard, K. E. (1999). "Alcohol use and husband marital aggression among newlywed couples", in X. B. A. S. Oskamp, (ed.), *Violence in intimate relationships*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc, pp. 113-135.

Leonard, K. E. (2005). "Alcohol and intimate partner violence: when can we say that heavy drinking is a contributing cause of violence?" *Addiction*, 100(4), 422-425 4p.

Letellier, P. (1994). "Gay and Bisexual Male Domestic Violence Victimization: Challenges to Feminist Theory and Responses to Violence." *Violence and Victims*, 9(2), 95-106.

Letherby, G. (2003). *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Levendosky, A. A., Lannert, B., and Yalch, M. (2012). "The Effects of Intimate Partner Violence on Women and Child Survivors: An Attachment Perspective." *Psychodynamic Psychiatry*, 40(3), 397-433.

Levine, A. R., and Fritz, P. A. T. (2016). "Coercive control, posttraumatic stress disorder, and depression among homeless women." *Partner Abuse*, 7(1), 26-43.

Lincoln, Y. S., and Guba, E. G. (1986). "But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation." *New Directions for Program Evaluation*(30), 73-84.

Lincoln, Y. S., and Guba, E. G. (1988). *Criteria for Assessing Naturalistic Inquiries as Reports*.

Lisco, C., Leone, R., Gallagher, K., and Parrott, D. (2015). "'Demonstrating Masculinity' Via Intimate Partner Aggression: The Moderating Effect of Heavy Episodic Drinking." *Sex Roles*, 73(1/2), 58-69.

Littlechild, B. (2003). "Working with aggressive and violent parents in child protection social work." *Practice: Social Work in Action*, 15(1), 33-44.

Littlechild, B. (2008). "Child Protection Social Work: Risks of Fears and Fears of Risks – Impossible Tasks from Impossible Goals?" *Social Policy & Administration*, 42(6), 662-675.
Logan, T. K., and Cole, J. (2011). "Exploring the Intersection of Partner Stalking and Sexual Abuse." *VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN*, 17(7), 904-924.
Logan, T. K., Cole, J., Shannon, L., and Walker, R. (2006). *Partner Stalking: How Women Respond, Cope and Survive*, New York: Springer.
Logan, T. K., Shannon, L., and Cole, J. (2007). "Stalking victimization in the context of intimate partner violence." *Violence and Victims*(6), 669.
Lokhmatkina, N. V., Feder, G., Blake, S., Morris, R., Powers, V., and Lightman, S. (2013). "Longitudinal measurement of cortisol in association with mental health and experience of domestic violence and abuse: study protocol." *BMC Psychiatry*, 13(1), 1-8.
Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, New York: Crossing Press.
Macdonald, G. S. (2016). "Domestic Violence and Private Family Court Proceedings: Promoting Child Welfare or Promoting Contact?" *Violence Against Women*, 22(7), 832-852.
Mair, C., Cunradi, C. B., Gruenewald, P. J., Todd, M., and Remer, L. (2013). "Drinking context-specific associations between intimate partner violence and frequency and volume of alcohol consumption." *Addiction*, 108(12), 2102-2111 10p.
Malos, E. (1995). *The Politics of Housework*, Cheltenham: New Clarion Press.
Malpass, A., Sales, K., and Feder, G. (2016). "Reducing symbolic-violence in the research encounter: collaborating with a survivor of domestic abuse in a qualitative study in UK primary care." *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 38(3), 442-458.
Manjoo, R. (2015). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences: Mission to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, Online: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session29/Documents/A_HRC_29_27_Add_2_en.doc.
Manjoo, R. (2016). "Special guest contribution: violence against women as a barrier to the realisation of human rights and the effective exercise of citizenship." *Feminist Review*, 112(1), 11-26.
Manning, W. D., Ostgaard, G., Cohen, J., and Smock, P. (2007). "Contemporary Courtship: Dating Couples and Their Perceptions of Cohabitation and Marriage." *Conference Papers -- American Sociological Association*, 1.
Mapayi, B., Makanjuola, R., Mosaku, S., Adewuya, O., Afolabi, O., Aloba, O., and Akinsulore, A. (2013). "Impact of intimate partner violence on anxiety and depression amongst women in Ile-Ife, Nigeria." *Archives of Women's Mental Health*, 16(1), 11-18.
Marie Claire. (2008). "Average man proposes after three years." *Marie Claire*, 18 February.
Marshall, G. (1990). "Pretty Woman". Touchstone Pictures: USA.
Martinson, J., and Grierson, J. (2016). "'Serious failings' at BBC let Jimmy Savile and Stuart Hall go unchecked". *The Guardian*, 25th February.
Mason, R., and Du Mont, J. (2015). "Advancing our knowledge of the complexity and management of intimate partner violence and co-occurring mental health and substance abuse problems in women." *F1000prime Reports*, 7, 65-65.

Matczak, A., Hatzidimitriadou, E., and Lindsay, J. (2011). *Review of Domestic Violence Policies in England and Wales*, London: Kingston University and St George's, University of London.
Maxwell, L., Devries, K., Zionts, D., Alhusen, J. L., and Campbell, J. (2015). "Estimating the Effect of Intimate Partner Violence on Women's Use of Contraception: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." *PLoS ONE*, 10(2), 1-25.
Maxwell, N., Scourfield, J., Featherstone, B., Holland, S., and Tolman, R. (2012). "Engaging fathers in child welfare services: a narrative review of recent research evidence." *Child & Family Social Work*, 17(2), 160-169 10p.
McCarthy, M., Hunt, S., and Milne-Skillman, K. (2017). "'I Know it was Every Week, but I Can't be Sure if it was Every Day': Domestic Violence and Women with Learning Disabilities." *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 30(2), 269-282.
McCleary-Sills, J., Namy, S., Nyoni, J., Rweyemamu, D., Salvatory, A., and Steven, E. (2016). "Stigma, shame and women's limited agency in help-seeking for intimate partner violence." *Global Public Health*, 11(1/2), 224-235.
McCrea, S. T. (2012). *Jerk Radar: How to Stop an Abusive Relationship Before It Starts*, Portland, OR: Inkwater Press.
McDonald, J. (2005a). "Neo-liberalism and the pathologising of public issues: The displacement of feminist service models in domestic violence support services." *Australian Social Work*, 58(3), 275-284.
McDonald, J. (2005b). "Neo-liberalism and the pathologising of public issues: the displacement of feminist service models in domestic violence support services." *Australian Social Work*, 58(3), 275-284 10p.
McGarry, J., Ali, P., and Hinchliff, S. (2017). "Older women, intimate partner violence and mental health: a consideration of the particular issues for health and healthcare practice." *Journal of Clinical Nursing*(15-16), 2177.
McKie, L. (2005). *Families, Violence and Social Change*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.
McLaughlin, H., Uggen, C., and Blackstone, A. (2012). "Sexual Harassment, Workplace Authority, and the Paradox of Power." *American Sociological Review*, 77(4), 625-647.
McLaughlin, K. (2012). *Surviving Identity: Vulnerability and the Psychology of Recognition*, Hove: Routledge.
McNamee, S. (1988). "Accepting Research as Social Intervention: Implications of a Systemic Epistemology." *Communication Quarterly*, 36(1), 50-68.
McRobbie, A. (2009). *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*, London: Sage.
Mendelsohn, R. (2014). "Revisiting the Sadomasochistic Marriage: The Paranoid-MasochisticRelationship." *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 101(5), 647-673.
Messing, J. (2011). "The Social Control of Family Violence." *Affilia*, 26(2), 154-168.
Michailova, S., Piekkari, R., Plakoyiannaki, E., Ritvala, T., Mihailova, I., and Salmi, A. (2014). "Breaking the silence about exiting fieldwork: A relational approach and its implications for theorizing." *Academy of Management Review*, 39(2), 138-161.
Miller, J. F. (2013). *The triumphant victim: A psychoanalytical perspective on sadomasochism and perverse thinking*, London, England: Karnac Books.
Miller, S. L., and Smolter, N. L. (2011). ""Paper Abuse": When All Else Fails, Batterers Use Procedural Stalking." *Violence Against Women*, 17(5), 637-650.
Mills, M., and Lingard, B. (2010). "Masculinity Politics, Myths and Boys' Schooling: A Review Essay." *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 276-292.

Mirrlees-Black, C. (1999). *Domestic Violence: Findings from a new British Crime Survey self-completion questionnaire*, London: HMSO.
Mishler, E. G. (1991). *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Moghaddam, F. M. (2006). "Performance Capacity and Performance Style." *Theory & Psychology*, 16(6), 840.
Monckton-Smith, J. (2014). *Domestic Abuse, Homicide and Gender: Strategies for Policy and Practice*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Monk, L. (2014). "Maternal Alienation". *Mothers Apart Project*. [Online] Available at: http://mothersapartproject.com/2014/11/06/maternal-alienation/ (Accessed 21st December 2017).
Monk, L. (Forthcoming). *Mothers Separated from their Children in a Context of Violence and Abuse*, Coventry, Coventry.
Moore, B. C., Easton, C. J., and McMahon, T. J. (2011). "Drug abuse and intimate partner violence: A comparative study of opioid-dependent fathers." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 81(2), 218-227.
Morris, A. (2009). "Gendered dynamics of abuse and violence in families: considering the abusive household gender regime." *Child Abuse Review*, 18(6), 414-427.
Morrison, P., and Stomski, N. J. (2015). "Embracing participation in mental health research: conducting authentic interviews." *Qualitative Research Journal (Emerald Group Publishing Limited)*, 15(1), 47-60.
Moulding, N. T., Buchanan, F., and Wendt, S. (2015). "Untangling Self-Blame and Mother-Blame in Women's and Children's Perspectives on Maternal Protectiveness in Domestic Violence: Implications for Practice." *Child Abuse Review*, 24(4), 249-260.
Mowrer, O., H. (1939). "A Stimulus-Response Analysis of Anxiety and Its Role as a Reinforcing Agent." *Psychological Review*, 46(6), 553-565.
Mullender, A. (1996). *Rethinking Domestic Violence: The Social Work and Probation Response*, Abingdon: Routledge.
Murray, C., Crowe, A., and Akers, W. (2016). "How Can We End the Stigma Surrounding Domestic and Sexual Violence? A Modified Delphi Study with National Advocacy Leaders." *Journal of Family Violence*, 31(3), 271-287.
Murray, S., and Powell, A. (2009). ""What's the Problem?" Australian Public Policy Constructions of Domestic and Family Violence." *Violence Against Women*, 15(5), 532-552.
Myhill, A. (2015). "Measuring coercive control: What can we learn from national population surveys?" *Violence Against Women*, 21(3), 355-375.
Myhill, A. (2017). "Measuring domestic violence: context is everything." *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 1(1), 33-44.
Neale, J. (2013). "Professionals' Responses to Women in Abusive Relationships: Valued Support, or Collusion with Perpetrators?"*British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women Conference*. Windsor, UK.
Neale, J. (2014). "Making the Case for Victims' Meaningful Participation in the Development of Domestic Abuse Services"*British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women Section Conference*. Windsor, UK.
Neale, J. (2015a). "The Beam, and Shadows, of the Spotlight: Visibility and Invisibility in Women's Accounts of Abusive Relationships"*European Conference on Domestic Violence*. Queen's University, Belfast, NI.

Neale, J. (2015b). "'Identity Theft': Living With Domestic Abuse"*British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women Section Conference*. Windsor, UK.
Neale, J. (2015c). "Professionals' Responses to Women in Abusive Relationships: Valued Support, or Collusion With Perpetrators?"*'Violence: Children and Families' Conference*. University of Northampton, Northampton, UK.
Neale, J., and Worrell, M. (2010). "Visibility, responsibility and identity in domestic murder-suicide." *Safe*(Spring), 22-25.
Neate, P. (2015). "Women's Aid News: Looking Ahead to the New Offence of Coercive Control". Women's Aid Federation of England: London.
Nedegaard, R., and Sbrocco, T. (2014). "The Impact of Anger on the Intimate Partner Violence Decision-Making Process." *Journal of Family Violence*, 29(6), 613-624.
Nevid, J., S, and Rathus, S., A. (2010). *Psychology and the Challenges of Life: Adjustment and Growth (11th Edn.)*, Danvers, MA (USA): John Wiley.
NIMH. (2016). *Borderline Personality Disorder.* [online] Available at: http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/borderline-personality-disorder/index.shtml (Accessed: 23 July 2016).
Nydes, J. (2013). "The paranoid-masochistic character." *Psychoanalytic Review*, 100(3), 473-512.
O'Farrell, T. J., Van Hutton, V., and Murphy, C. M. (1999). "Domestic violence before and after alcoholism treatment: A two-year longitudinal study." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 60(3), 317-321.
O'Hare, T., Shen, C., and Sherrer, M. V. (2016). "Lifetime Physical and Sexual Abuse and Self-Harm in Women With Severe Mental Illness." *Violence Against Women, 22(10)*, 1211-1227.
O'Leary-Kelly, A., Lean, E., Reeves, C., and Randel, J. (2008). "Coming Into the Light: Intimate Partner Violence and Its Effects at Work." *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 22(2), 57-72.
O'Leary, K. D., and Curley, A. D. (1986). "Assertion and family violence: Correlates of spouse abuse." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 12(3), 281-289.
O'Leary, K. D., Malone, J., and Tyree, A. (1994). "Physical aggression in early marriage: Prerelationship and relationship effects." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 62(3), 594-602.
Oakley, A. (1975). *The Sociology of Housework*, New York: Pantheon.
Oakley, A. (1981). "Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms", in H. Roberts, (ed.), *Doing Feminist Research*. London: Routledge, pp. 30-61.
Oakley, A. (1990). *Housewife: High Value - Low Cost*, London: Penguin.
Ofshe, R. J. (2000). "Coercive Persuasion and Attitude Change", in E. F. B. a. R. J. V. Montgomery, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Sociology*. New York: Macmillan.
Ogland, C. (2011). "The Link between Witnessing Violence and Approval of Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence from Three African Countries." *Conference Papers -- American Sociological Association*, 444-444.
Olaya, B., Ezpeleta, L., de la Osa, N., Granero, R., and Doménech, J. M. (2010). "Mental health needs of children exposed to intimate partner violence seeking help from mental health services." *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32(7), 1004-1011.
Olsen, L. (2004). "The role of voice in the (re)construction of a battered woman's identity: An autoethnography of one woman's experiences of abuse." *Women's Studies in Communication*, 27(1), 1-33.

ONS. (2015). *Violent Crime and Sexual Offences - Intimate Personal Violence and Serious Sexual Assault*. Office for National Statistics, London.
ONS. (2016a). *Crime in England and Wales: year ending Mar 2016*. Office for National Statistics, London.
ONS. (2016b). *Families and households in the UK*. Office for National Statistics, London.
Oram, S., Trevillion, K., Feder, G., and Howard, L. M. (2013). "Prevalence of experiences of domestic violence among psychiatric patients: Systematic review." *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 202(2), 94-99.
Ornstein, P., and Rickne, J. (2013). "When Does Intimate Partner Violence Continue After Separation?" *Violence against Women*, 19(5), 617-633.
Pagelow, M. D. (1982). Children in violent families: direct & indirect victims. In S. Hill and B. J. Barnes (eds) *Young Children and Their Families*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
Pain, R. (2012). *Everyday Terrorism: How Fear Works in Domestic Abuse*. Durham University & Scottish Women's Aid.
Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice (4th ed.)*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Paulhus, D. L. (2014). "Toward a taxonomy of dark personalities." *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 23(6), 421-426.
Paulhus, D. L., and Jones, D. N. (2015). "Measures of dark personalities", in G. J. Boyle, D. H. Saklofske, G. Matthews, G. J. Boyle, D. H. Saklofske, and G. Matthews, (eds.), *Measures of personality and social psychological constructs.* San Diego, CA, US: Elsevier Academic Press, pp. 562-594.
Paulhus, D. L., and Williams, K. M. (2002). "The Dark Triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy." *Journal of Research in Personality*, 36(6), 556-563.
Peate, I. (2017). "Mental health care in prisons." *British Journal of Nursing*, 26(18), 1005.
Peckover, S. (2014). "Domestic Abuse, Safeguarding Children and Public Health: Towards an Analysis of Discursive Forms and Surveillant Techniques in Contemporary UK Policy and Practice." *British Journal of Social Work*, 44(7), 1770-1787.
Pels, T., van Rooij, F., and Distelbrink, M. (2015). "The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) on Parenting by Mothers Within an Ethnically Diverse Population in the Netherlands." *Journal of Family Violence*, 30(8), 1055-1067.
Pence, E., and Paymar, M. (1993). *Education Groups for Men Who Batter: The Duluth Model*, New York: Springer.
Perrault, C. (2013). *Cinderella*: www.the-planet-books.com.
Peterson, C., and Seligman, M. E. P. (1983). "Learned helplessness and victimization." *Journal of Social Issues*, 39, 103-116.
Pigeon, W. R., Cerulli, C., Richards, H., He, H., Perlis, M., and Caine, E. (2011). "Sleep Disturbances and Their Association With Mental Health Among Women Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence." *Journal of Women's Health (15409996)*, 20(12), 1923-1929.
Pitts, J. (1988). *The Politics of Juvenile Crime*, London: Sage.
Pleck, E. (1987). *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of American Social Policy Against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present*, New York: Oxford University Press.
Plugge, E., and Fitzpatrick, R. (2005). "Assessing the health of women in prison: a study from the United Kingdom." *Health Care for Women International*, 26(1), 62-68.

Policastro, C., and Payne, B. K. (2013). "The Blameworthy Victim: Domestic Violence Myths and the Criminalization of Victimhood." *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 22(4), 329-347.
Police Foundation. (2014). *Policing Domestic Abuse*. The Police Foundation, London.
Powell, J. (2008). "The Impact of Societal Systems on Black Male Violence." *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 16(3), 311-329.
Power, C., Koch, T., Kralik, D., and Jackson, D. (2006). "Lovestruck : women, romantic love and intimate partner violence." *Contemporary Nurse*, 21(2), 174-185.
Ptacek, J. (1999). "Battered women in the courtroom: the power of judicial responses". The Haworth Press: Boston, MA, pp. xii.
Rada, C. (2014). "Violence against women by male partners and against children within the family: prevalence, associated factors, and intergenerational transmission in Romania: a cross-sectional study." *BMC Public Health*, 14(1), 1-29.
Radford, J., and Russell, D. E. H. (1992). "Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing". Twayne: New York.
Radford, L., Susana Corral, Bradley, C., Fisher, H., Bassett, C., Howat, N., and Collishaw, S. (2011). *Child Abuse and Neglect in the UK Today*. NSPCC, London.
Rance, N., Clarke, V., and Moller, N. (2017). "The anorexia nervosa experience: Shame, Solitude and Salvation." *Counselling & Psychotherapy Research*, 17(2), 127-136.
Rance, N. M., Clarke, V., and Moller, N. P. (2014). "“If I See Somebody … I'll Immediately Scope Them Out”: Anorexia Nervosa Clients’ Perceptions of Their Therapists’ Body." *Eating Disorders*, 22(2), 111-120.
Reed, L. R. (1999). "Troubling Boys and Disturbing Discourses on Masculinity and Schooling: a feminist exploration of current debates and interventions concerning boys in school." *Gender & Education*, 11(1), 93-110.
Reingle, J., Jennings, W., Connell, N., Businelle, M., and Chartier, K. (2014). "On the Pervasiveness of Event-Specific Alcohol Use, General Substance Use, and Mental Health Problems as Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Violence." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 29(16), 2951-2970.
Reynolds, R., and Siegle, E. (1959). "A Study of Casework with Sado-masochistic Marriage Partners." *Social Casework*, 40(10), 545-551.
Rich, C. L., Gidycz, C. A., Warkentin, J. B., Loh, C., and Weiland, P. (2005). "Child and Adolescent Abuse and Subsequent Victimization: A Prospective Study." *Child Abuse & Neglect: The International Journal*, 29(12), 1373-1394.
Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative Analysis*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Riessman, C. K. (1994). "Making sense of marital violence: One woman's narrative", in C. K. Riessman and C. K. Riessman, (eds.), *Qualitative studies in social work research.* Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc, pp. 113-138.
Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.
Ringrose, J., Harvey, L., Gill, R., Livingstone, S., Renold, E., and Ringrose, J. (2013). "Teen girls, sexual double standards and ‘sexting’: Gendered value in digital image exchange." *Feminist Theory*, 14(3), 305-323.
Ristock, J. (2004). *No More Secrets: Violence in Lesbian Relationships*, London: Taylor and Francis.
Rivera, P. M., and Fincham, F. (2015). "Forgiveness as a Mediator of the Intergenerational Transmission of Violence." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 30(6), 895-910.

Robbins, R., Banks, C., McLaughlin, H., Bellamy, C., and Thackray, D. (2016). "Is Domestic Abuse an Adult Social Work Issue?" *Social Work Education*, 1-13.
Roberts, H. (1981). "Doing Feminist Research". Routledge: London.
Robinson, L., Griffiths, M., Wray, J., Ure, C., Shires, G., Stein-Hodgins, J. R., Hill, C., and Hilton, B. (2015). "Preparing women for breast screening mammography: A feasibility study to determine the potential value of an on-line social network and information hub." *Radiography*, 21(4), 308-314.
Romito, P. (2008). *A Deafening Silence: Hidden Violence Against Women and Children*, Bristol: Policy Press.
Rose, E. (2015). "A feminist reconceptualisation of intimate partner violence against women: A crime against humanity and a state crime." *Women's Studies International Forum*, 53, 31-42.
Rosenfeld, M., and Thomas, R. (2012). "Searching for a Mate." *American Sociological Review*, 77(4), 523-547.
Sadler, G. R., Lee, H., Lim, R. S., and Fullerton, J. (2010). "Recruitment of hard-to-reach population subgroups via adaptations of the snowball sampling strategy." *Nursing & Health Sciences*, 12(3), 369-374 6p.
Sallinen, M., and Kukkurainen, M. L. (2015). "'I've Been Walking on Eggshells All My Life': Fibromyalgia Patients' Narratives About Experienced Violence and Abuse." *Musculoskeletal Care*, 13(3), 160-168.
Salom, C. L., Williams, G. M., Najman, J. M., and Alati, R. (2015). "Substance use and mental health disorders are linked to different forms of intimate partner violence victimisation." *Drug & Alcohol Dependence*, 151, 121-127 7p.
Samuels, H. (2003). "Sexual harassment in the workplace: a feminist analysis of recent developments in the UK." *Women's Studies International Forum*, 26(5), 467-482.
Sanders, C. K. (2015). "Economic abuse in the lives of women abused by an intimate partner: a qualitative study." *Violence Against Women*, 21(1), 3-29.
Sanz-Barbero, B., Vives-Cases, C., Otero-García, L., Muntaner, C., Torrubiano-Domínguez, J., and O'Campo, Y. P. (2015). "Intimate partner violence among women in Spain: the impact of regional-level male unemployment and income inequality." *European Journal Of Public Health*.
Sarkar, N. N. (2008). "The impact of intimate partner violence on women's reproductive health and pregnancy outcome." *Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, 28(3), 266-271.
Scharff, C. (2010). "Silencing differences: the 'unspoken' dimensions of 'speaking for others'", in R. Ryan-Flood and R. Gill, (eds.), *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections*. London: Routledge, pp. 83-95.
Schwandt, T. A., Lincoln, Y. S., and Guba, E. G. (2007). "Judging Interpretations: But Is It Rigorous? Trustworthiness and Authenticity in Naturalistic Evaluation." *New Directions for Evaluation*(114), 11-25.
Scott, S. (1994). "Lies, lesbians and statistics." *Trouble and Strife*, 28, 36-40.
Scribano, P., Stevens, J., and Kaizar, E. (2013). "The Effects of Intimate Partner Violence Before, During, and After Pregnancy in Nurse Visited First Time Mothers." *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 17(2), 307-318.
Shapiro, E. (2013). *Domestic Violence Among the Wealthy Hides Behind 'Veil of Silence'.* [online] Available at: http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/02/28/domestic-

violence-among-the-wealthy-hides-behind-veil-of-silence.html (Accessed: 5 November 2015).
Sharp-Jeffs, N. (2015). *Money Matters: Research into the Extent and Nature of Financial Abuse Within Intimate Relationships in the UK*. London.
Sharp-Jeffs, N., Kelly, L., and Klein, R. (2017). "Long Journeys Toward Freedom." *Violence Against Women*, 0(0), 1077801216686199.
Shaw, C., and Proctor, G. (2005). "Women at the margins: A critique of the diagnosis of borderline personality disorder." *Feminism & Psychology*, 15(4), 483-490.
Shields, S. (1975). "Functionalism, Darwinism, and the psychology of women." *American Psychologist*, 30(7), 739-754.
Shields, S. A. (2016). "X. Functionalism, Darwinism, and intersectionality: Using an intersectional perspective to reveal the appropriation of science to support the status quo." *Feminism & Psychology*, 26(3), 353-365.
Shoemaker, R. B. (2013). *Gender in English Society, 1650 - 1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres*, London: Routledge.
Shuler, S. (2003). "Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling Without Breaking a Nail: Women Executives in Fortune Magazine's "Power 50" List." *American Communication Journal*, 6(2), 1-1.
Signorelli, M. S., Arcidiacono, E., and Aguglia, E. (2012). "P-1450 - What factors are associated with intimate partner violence? Evaluation of the impact of risk factors and psychopathological consequences." *European Psychiatry*, 27, 1-1.
Sillito, C. (2012a). "Gendered physical and emotional health consequences of situational couple violence for heterosexual married and cohabiting couples." *Feminist Criminology*, 7(4), 255-281.
Sillito, C. (2012b). "Physical Health Effects of Intimate Partner Abuse." *Journal of Family Issues*, 33(11), 1520-1539.
Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing Qualitative Research (Fourth Edition)*, London: Sage.
Sin, C. H. (2007). "Ethnic-matching in qualitative research: reversing the gaze on 'white others' and 'white' as 'other'." *Qualitative Research*, 7(4), 477-499 23p.
Singh, V., Tolman, R., Walton, M., Chermack, S., and Cunningham, R. (2014). "Characteristics of men who perpetrate intimate partner violence." *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*, 27(5), 661-668 8p.
Skinner, B. F. (1963). "Operant behavior." *American Psychologist*, 18(8), 503-515.
Skinner, T., Hester, M., and Malos, E. (2005). "Methodology, feminism and gender violence", in T. Skinner, M. Hester, and E. Malos, (eds.), *Researching Gender Violence: Feminist Methodology in Action*. Cullompton, Devon: Willan.
Skomorovsky, A., Hujaleh, F., and Wolejszo, S. (2015). "Intimate Partner Violence in the Canadian Armed Forces: The Role of Family Stress and Its Impact on Well-Being." *Military Medicine*, 180(7), 809-816.
Smith, K., Flatley, J., Coleman, K., Osborne, S., Kaiza, P., and Roe, S. (2010). *Homicides, Firearms Offences and Intimate Violence 2008/09*. Home Office, London.
Smith, K., Osborne, S., Lau, I., and Britton, A. (2012a). *Homicides, Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence 2010/11: Supplementary Volume 2 to Crime in England and Wales 2010/11*, London: Home Office.
Smith, P. H., Homish, G. G., Leonard, K. E., and Cornelius, J. R. (2012b). "Intimate partner violence and specific substance use disorders: Findings from the National

Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions." *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 26(2), 236-245.
Snell, J., E, Rosenwald, R., J, and Robey, A. (1964). "The Wifebeater's Wife: A Study of Family Interaction." *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 11(2), 107-112.
Sokoloff, N. J., and Pratt, C. (2005). *Domestic Violence at the Margins: Readings on Race, Class, Gender, and Culture*: Rutgers University Press.
Song, A., Wenzel, S. L., Kim, J. Y., and Nam, B. (2015a). "Experience of Domestic Violence During Childhood, Intimate Partner Violence, and the Deterrent Effect of Awareness of Legal Consequences." *Journal Of Interpersonal Violence*. DOI: 10.1177/0886260515586359.
Song, Y., Son, Y. J., and Oh, D. (2015b). "Methodological Issues in Questionnaire Design." *Journal Of Korean Academy Of Nursing*, 45(3), 323-328.
Sousa, C. A., Yacoubian, K., Flaherty Fischette, P., and Haj-Yahia, M. M. (2015). "The Co-Occurrence and Unique Mental Health Effects of Political Violence and Intimate Partner Violence." *Journal Of Interpersonal Violence*. DOI: 10.1177/0886260515605120.
Speer, S., A. (2005). *Gender Talk: Feminism, Discourse and Conversation Analysis*, Hove: Routledge.
Spender, D. (1998). *Man Made Language*, London: Rivers Oram Press.
Stalans, L., and Ritchie, J. (2008). "Relationship of Substance Use/Abuse with Psychological and Physical Intimate Partner Violence: Variations Across Living Situations." *Journal of Family Violence*, 23(1), 9-24.
Stanley, L. (1990). *Feminist Praxis: Research Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology*, London: Routledge.
Stanley, N., Miller, P., Foster, H. R., and Thomson, G. (2011). "A stop–start response: Social services' interventions with children and families notified following domestic violence incidents." *British Journal of Social Work*, 41(2), 296-313.
Stanley, S. (2012). "Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Violence Myths: A Comparison of Women With and Without Alcoholic Husbands (A Study from India)." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 43(5), 647-672.
Stark, E. (2006). "Commentary on Johnson's 'Conflict and Control: Gender symmetry and asymmetry in domestic violence'." *Violence Against Women*, 12(11), 1019-1025.
Stark, E. (2009). *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Stark, E. (2012a). "The Dangers of Dangerousness Assessment." *Domestic Violence Report*, 17(5), 65-75.
Stark, E. (2012b). "Looking Beyond Domestic Violence: Policing Coercive Control." *Journal of Police Crisis Negotiations*, 12(2), 199-217.
Stark, E. (2015). "Coercive Control". *Women's Aid Federation National Conference*. London.
Starmer, K. (2011). "Domestic violence: The facts, the issues, the future." *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology*, 25(1/2), 9-15.
Steadman, H. J., Monahan, J., Pinals, D. A., Vesselinov, R., and Robbins, P. C. (2015). "Gun Violence and Victimization of Strangers by Persons With a Mental Illness: Data From the MacArthur Violence Risk Assessment Study." *Psychiatric Services (Washington, D.C.)*, 66(11), 1238-1241.
Stein, A. (2012). "Engendered self-states: Dissociated affect, social discourse, and the forfeiture of agency in battered women." *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 29(1), 34-58.

Stenbacka, C. (2001). "Qualitative research requires quality concepts of its own." *Management Decision*, 39(7), 551.
Stephens, B. J., and Sinden, P. G. (2000). "Victims' voices: Domestic assault victims' perceptions of police demeanor." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 15(5), 534-547.
Stewart, P. (2014). "It's never "just a domestic"." *New Statesman*, 143(5225), 16-16.
Stöckl, H., Devries, K., Rotstein, A., Abrahams, N., Campbell, J., Watts, C., and Moreno, C. G. (2013). "The global prevalence of intimate partner homicide: A systematic review." *The Lancet*, 382(9895), 859-865.
Stöckl, H., and Penhale, B. (2015). "Intimate Partner Violence and Its Association With Physical and Mental Health Symptoms Among Older Women in Germany." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 30(17), 3089-3111 23p.
Stockman, J. K., Hayashi, H., and Campbell, J. C. (2015). "Intimate partner violence and its health impact on disproportionately affected populations, including minorities and impoverished groups." *Journal of Women's Health*, 24(1), 62-79.
Storr, A. (1968). *Human Aggression*, New York: Allen Lane The Penguin Press.
Storr, A. (1977). *Sexual Deviation*, Harmondsworth: Pelican Penguin.
Stotland, N. L. (2000). "Tug-of-war: Domestic abuse and the misuse of religion." *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 157(5), 696-702.
Straus, M. A. (1979). "Measuring Intrafamily Conflict and Violence: The Conflict Tactics (CT) Scales." *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 41(1), 75-88.
Strega, S., Krane, J., Lapierre, S., Richardson, C., and Carlton, R. (2013). "Failure to Protect: Moving Beyond Gendered Responses". Fernwood Publishing: Black Point, Nova Scotia.
Sullivan, T., J. (2008). "Professionals who sexually abuse the children with whom they work". University of Birmingham: Birmingham.
Sundari, A., Roy, A., and Yalamarty, H. (2016). *Disposable Women: Abuse, Violence and Abandonment in Transnational Marriages*, Lincoln: University of Lincoln.
Sutton, T., Simons, L. G., Wickrama, and Futris, T. (2014). "The Intergenerational Transmission of Violence: Examining the Mediating Roles of Insecure Attachment and Destructive Disagreement Beliefs." *Violence and Victims*, 29(4), 670-687.
Szreter, S., and Fisher, K. (2010). *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England 1918–1963*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human Groups and Social Categories*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Telch, C. F., and Lindquist, C. U. (1984). "Violent versus nonviolent couples: A comparison of patterns." *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 21(2), 242-248.
Terry, G., and Braun, V. (2016). "“I think gorilla-like back effusions of hair are rather a turn-off”: ‘Excessive hair’ and male body hair (removal) discourse." *Body Image*, 17, 14-24.
Thiara, R., K. (2013). "'It's all about stopping you from getting on with your life': Post-separation violence in the lives of Asian and African-Caribbean women", in Y. Rehman, L. Kelly, and H. Siddiqui, (eds.), *Moving in the Shadows: Violence in the Lives of Minority Women and Children*. Farnham: Ashgate.
Thiara, R., K. and Gill, A. (2012). Domestic Violence, Child Contact and Post-Separation Violence: Issues for South Asian and African-Caribbean Women and Children. London: NSPCC.

Thiara, R. K., and Humphreys, C. (2015). "Absent presence: the ongoing impact of men's violence on the mother–child relationship." *Child & Family Social Work*, 20, 30-39.
Thiara, R. K., and Humphreys, C. (2017). "Absent presence: the ongoing impact of men's violence on the mother-child relationship." *Child & Family Social Work*, 22(1), 137-145.
Thomas, R. (2011). "How Americans (Mostly Don't) Find an Interracial Partner." *Conference Papers -- American Sociological Association*, 452-452.
Towns, A., and Adams, P. (2000). "'If I really loved him enough, he would be okay': women's accounts of male partner violence." *Violence Against Women*(6), 558.
Towns, A. J., and Adams, P. J. (2016). ""I Didn't Know Whether I Was Right or Wrong or Just Bewildered": Ambiguity, Responsibility, and Silencing Women's Talk of Men's Domestic Violence." *Violence Against Women*, 22(4), 496-520.
Towns, A. J., and Scott, H. (2013). "'I couldn't even dress the way I wanted..' Young women talk of 'ownership' by boyfriends: An opportunity for the prevention of domestic violence?" *Feminism & Psychology*, 23(4), 536.
Townsend, M. (2015). "Domestic victims to join abusers in family therapy"*The Observer*. Guardian News and Media Ltd: London.
Trumble, K. L. (2003). ""Her Body Is Her Own": Victorian Feminists, Sexual Violence, and Political Subjectivity". DigiNole Commons: United States, North America.
United Nations. (1948). *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* [online] Available at: http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html (Accessed: 29 August 2016).
UoB. (2010). *Data Protection Policy*, Luton: University of Bedfordshire.
UoB. (2015). *IT Data Security Policy*, Luton: University of Bedfordshire.
Ussher, J. (2011). *The Madness of Women: Myth and Experience*, Hove: Routledge.
Valpied, J., Cini, A., O'Doherty, L., Taket, A., and Hegarty, K. (2014). "“Sometimes cathartic. Sometimes quite raw”: Benefit and harm in an intimate partner violence trial." *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 19(6), 673-685.
van Geel, M., Goemans, A., Toprak, F., and Vedder, P. (2017). "Which personality traits are related to traditional bullying and cyberbullying? A study with the Big Five, Dark Triad and sadism." *Personality and Individual Differences*, 106, 231-235.
Velonis, A., J. (2016). "“He Never Did Anything You Typically Think of as Abuse”: Experiences With Violence in Controlling and Non-Controlling Relationships in a Non-Agency Sample of Women." *Violence Against Women*, 22(9), 1031-1054.
Vézina, J., Hébert, M., Poulin, F., Lavoie, F., Vitaro, F., and Tremblay, R. E. (2015). "History of family violence, childhood behavior problems, and adolescent high-risk behaviors as predictors of girls' repeated patterns of dating victimization in two developmental periods." *Violence Against Women*, 21(4), 435-459.
Virkki, T. (2015). "Social and Health Care Professionals' Views on Responsible Agency in the Process of Ending Intimate Partner Violence." *Violenge Against Women*, 21(6), 712-733.
Walby, S. (2009). *The Cost of Domestic Violence: Up-date 2009*, Lancaster: Lancaster University.
Walby, S., and Allen, J. (2004). *Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*. Home Office, London.
Walby, S., and Olive, P. (2014). *Estimating the Costs of Gender-Based Violence in the European Union*. European Institute for Gender Equality, Vilnius.

Walby, S., and Towers, J. (2017). "Measuring violence to end violence: mainstreaming gender." *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 1(1), 11-31.
Walby, S., Towers, J., and Francis, B. (2014). "Mainstreaming domestic and gender-based violence into sociology and the criminology of violence." *The Sociological Review*, 62, 187-214.
Walby, S., Towers, J., and Francis, B. (2015). "Is Violent Crime Increasing or Decreasing? A New Methodology to Measure Repeat Attacks Making Visible the Significance of Gender and Domestic Relations." *British Journal of Criminology*. DOI: 10.1093/bjc/azv131.
Walker, L. E. A. (2009). *The Battered Woman Syndrome (3rd ed.)*, New York, NY, US: Springer Publishing Co.
Walker, P. (2017). "Theresa May meets parliamentary staff to hear views on abuse"*The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media Limited: London.
Wareham, J., Boots, D. P., and Chavez, J. M. (2009). "A test of social learning and intergenerational transmission among batterers." *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 37(2), 163-173.
Warner, S. (2009). *Understanding the Effects of Child Sexual Abuse: Feminist Revolutions in Theory, Research and Practice*, Hove, East Sussex: Routledge.
Warner, S., and Wilkins, T. (2003). "Diagnosing distress and reproducing disorder: Women, child sexual abuse and borderline personality disorder", in P. Reavey and S. Warner, (eds.), *New Feminist Stories About Women and Child Sexual Abuse: Sexual Scripts and Dangerous Dialogues*. London: Taylor and Francis, pp. 167-186.
Warrington, M. (2001). "'I must get out': the geographies of domestic violence." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 26(3), 365-382.
Warrington, M. (2003). "Fleeing from fear: The changing role of refugees in meeting the needs of women leaving violent partners." *Capital & Class*, 27(80), 123-150.
Wathen, C. N., MacGregor, J. C. D., and MacQuarrie, B. J. (2015). "The Impact of Domestic Violence in the Workplace." *Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine*, 57(7), e65-e71.
Weatherall, A. (2002). *Gender, Language and Discourse*, Hove: Routledge.
Weiss, N. H., Duke, A. A., and Sullivan, T. P. (2014). "Evidence for a curvilinear dose-response relationship between avoidance coping and drug use problems among women who experience intimate partner violence." *Anxiety, Stress, And Coping*, 27(6), 722-732.
Weitzman, S. (2001). *Not To People Like Us: Hidden Abuse In Upscale Marriages*, New York: Basic Books.
Wendt, S., and Zannettino, L. (2015). *Domestic Violence in Diverse Contexts: A Re-examination of Gender*, Abingdon: Routledge.
Werner, O., and Campbell, D. T. (1970). "Translating, working through interpreters, and the problem of decentering", in R. Naroll and R. Cohen, (eds.), *A Handbook of Method in Cultural Anthropology*. New York: Natural History Press.
Westhead, J., and Egan, V. (2015). "Untangling the concurrent influences of the Dark Triad, personality and mating effort on violence." *Personality and Individual Differences*, 86, 222-226.
Westmarland, N., and Hester, M. (2007). *Time for Change: An Assessment of Services for Domestic Abuse Perpetrators in Bristol*, Bristol: University of Bristol.

Westmarland, N., and Kelly, L. (2013). "Why Extending Measurements of 'Success' in Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes Matters for Social Work." *British Journal of Social Work*, 43(6), 1092-1110.

Whitfield, C. L., Anda, R. F., Dube, S. R., and Felitti, V. J. (2003). "Violent Childhood Experiences and the Risk of Intimate Partner Violence in Adults." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 18(2), 166.

WHO. (2014). *Violence Against Women: Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Against Women. Fact sheet N°239*. World Health Organisation, http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/#.

Wilcox, P. (2006). *Surviving Domestic Violence: Gender, Poverty and Agency*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wilcox, P. (2008). "Constructing the victim and perpetrator of domestic violence", in M. D'Artrey, (ed.), *Media, Representation and Society*. Chester: Chester Academic Press.

Williams, C., Larsen, U., and McCloskey, L. A. (2010). "The impact of childhood sexual abuse and intimate partner violence on sexually transmitted infections." *Violence & Victims*, 25(6), 787-798.

Williamson, J. and Serna, K. (2018). "Reconsidering false labels: Outcomes of sexual assault survivors versus victims (and those who choose neither)". *Violence Against Women*, 24(6), 668-683.

Willig, C., and Stainton-Rogers, W. (2008). "The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology". Sage: London.

Willson, P., McFarlane, J., Malecha, A., Watson, K., Lemmey, D., Schultz, P., Gist, J., and Fredland, N. (2000). "Severity of violence against women by intimate partners and associated use of alcohol and/or illicit drugs by the perpetrator." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 15(9), 996-1008.

Wilson, M., and Daly, M. (1993). "Spousal Homicide Risk and Estrangement." *Violence and Victims*, 8, 3-13.

Witt, D. D. (1987). "A conflict theory of family violence." *Journal of Family Violence*, 2(4), 291-301.

Wittenberg, E., Joshi, M., Thomas, K. A., and McCloskey, L. A. (2007). "Measuring the effect of intimate partner violence on health-relatedquality of life: a qualitative focus group study." *Health & Quality of Life Outcomes*, 5, 67-73.

Wolfe, H. R., Haas, S., and Olley, C. (2014). "Prison Abuse and Mental Health". DigitalCommons@Cedarville: United States, North America.

Women's Aid. (2016). *Nineteen Child Homicides*. Women's Aid, Bristol.

Wong, J., and Mellor, D. (2014). "Intimate partner violence and women's health and wellbeing: Impacts, risk factors and responses." *Contemporary Nurse: A Journal for the Australian Nursing Profession*, 46(2), 170-179.

Wood, J. T. (2001). "The normalization of violence in heterosexual romantic relationships: Women's narratives of love and violence." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 18(2), 239-261.

Woodlock, D. (2017). "The Abuse of Technology in Domestic Violence and Stalking." *Violence Against Women*, 23(5), 584-602.

Wright, J. M., and Wisconsin Clearinghouse, M. (1982). *Chemical Dependency and Violence: Working with Dually Affected Families. A Cross-Training Program Manual for Counselors and Advocates*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Clearinghouse.

Wright, O. (2012). "Lobbying company tried to wipe out 'wife beater' beer references"*Independent*. Independent Print Ltd: London.
Xiaoling, S., Yifei, Z., and Zhanxin, Z. (2006). "Gender, Resource Dependence, and Utility Maximization: Marital Decision-Making Power in Urban China." 2006 Annual Meeting, Montreal: American Sociological Association.
Young, G. H., and Gerson, S. (1991). "New psychoanalytic perspectives on masochism and spouse abuse." *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 28(1), 30-38.
Zahnd, E., Aydin, M., Grant, D., and Holtby, S. (2011). "The link between intimate partner violence, substance abuse and mental health in California." *Policy Brief (UCLA Center For Health Policy Research),* (PB2011-10), 1-8.
Zhu, Y., and Dalal, K. (2010). "Childhood exposure to domestic violence and attitude toward wife beating in adult life: A study of men in India." *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 42(2), 255-269.

Appendix A: Brief Proposal

Dismantling and 'Remantling' of Self: Domestic Violence and Identity

Context of the study

I have a long-standing interest in gender-based violence, and have worked with support agencies local to the Luton area in both a research and voluntary capacity. During this time I have developed an interest in the ways in which women allude to 'identity dismantlement' as a feature of male to female domestic violence. This proposal sets out a rationale, the aims, and plan for an exploratory study of domestic violence and identity - work that will form the basis of my MPhil thesis.

Each of us identifies with more than one 'in-group', based on our gender, age, ethnicity, etc., and our relationships to those around us (for example, daughter, sister, wife, mother, friend, colleague) (Gergen 1991; Tajfel 1981). A common feature of male to female abuse is isolation of the victim (Abrahams 2010) – and clearly it is easier to control someone who has limited or no access to other forms of support. This isolation is achieved over time by damaging, or destroying, her relationships with family, friends, and other contacts. In my work with women experiencing domestic abuse, I am interested in their reflections on this process; a common perception is that it involves a gradual dismantling of their repertoire of identities. I propose to explore this process of identity dismantlement that is project managed by perpetrators of 'intimate terrorism' and that of reconstruction (or 'remantling') once a woman has taken the decision to move on from the relationship.

These processes of identity dismantling and remantling are not being 'performed' by one person acting alone. Others, whether consciously or unwittingly, facilitate or hamper this work. Thus my second aim is to explore the extent to which other people (family members, friends, professionals and agencies) contribute to these processes.

Very little has been written about the process of 'remantling' identities after domestic violence, and much of what does exist draws on the notion of 'recovery' rather than rebuilding (Evans and Lindsay 2008). My intention is that this proposed study will make a novel and useful contribution to our knowledge.

Method

Research approach and context for the study

The ways in which we think about domestic violence are subjective, and culturally bound. They are formed, and continue to be influenced, by a host of socio-cultural factors, the combinations of which are unique to each individual. This study is historically and culturally contingent in that the 'knowledge' I choose to present will indicate the period, and society, in which I live – and my position (both societal, and political) within these frameworks.

I will draw on feminism and post-structuralism (Warner 2009) to critically examine currents ways of understanding identity in relation to domestic violence. Thus I will be resisting, and arguing for an alternative to, psychology's individualist tradition in which the 'problem' is located within individuals

(i.e. certain people perpetrate, invite another to perpetrate, or do not do enough to prevent/resist domestic violence). I suggest this leads to: the blaming of individuals; a stunting simplification of the problem(s) and the solution(s); and narrows the range of understanding. I wish to explore the notion of identity, in relation to domestic violence, as a social process (Gergen 2009).

Research methods and materials

Methods

I propose to conduct a series of face to face interviews with women who have experienced domestic violence. I will encourage participants to explore the notion of multiple identities from their own personal perspectives, and provide a detailed composite picture of themselves at various key stages in their lives - i.e. before, during and (where appropriate) after the abusive relationship.

Interviews will be transcribed, and then analysed using constructivist grounded theory (Denzin and Lincoln 2003).

Materials

Interviews will be recorded (where consent for this is given) using a digital voice recorder. Hand written notes will also be made. Audio files and hand written notes will be uploaded on to a personal computer, and transcribed. Data will be analysed using Atlas.ti software.

Participants

Recruiting to the study

I will adopt a theoretical sampling strategy (Silverman 2013), in that I will be seeking to generalise my findings to a set of theoretical propositions developed through my literature review, rather than to a particular population. I intend to select participants on the basis of their relevance to my research questions and, as such, my theoretical position – rather than attempt a sample that is representative of any given group.

I have long-standing relationships with staff, and some service users, of Luton Women's Aid and Luton All Women's Centre. Each agency operates a range of projects (for example, women only drop-ins, Freedom programme[34], parenting programmes) that involve working with women who have experienced domestic violence. I also have a number of personal acquaintances who have been in abusive relationships in the past. Twelve participants will be sought via the agencies from these various groups and projects, and via my own personal networks. The ethical implications of adopting this approach are considered and addressed in the attached Research Ethics Scrutiny Form.

[34] A programme designed to help women who have experienced domestic violence to remain abuse-free.

Appendix B: Ethics Approval Letter

Ms Jo Neale

Senior Research Fellow

Institute of Applied Social Research

19 January 2011

Dear Jo

Re: IASREC Application No: 08

Project Title: Dismantling and 'Remantling' of Self: Domestic Violence and Identity

The Ethics Committee of the Institute of Applied Social Research has considered your application and has decided that the proposed research project should be approved.

Please note that if it becomes necessary to make any substantive change to the research design, the sampling approach or the data collection methods a further application will be required.

If the proposed work involves users or providers of any local authority service (this includes some education, pre-school and care establishments) you will additionally need approval from the relevant Local Authority.

If the project involves users of providers of health services approval will also be required from the relevant NHS Research Ethics Committee.

Proposals relevant to Luton Borough Council's Research Governance Committee will be forwarded by IASREC on your behalf. For other councils this will be the responsibility of the researcher. In all cases **it is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of proof of all necessary authorisations <u>before</u> any fieldwork commences**.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Melrose

Chair IASREC

Appendix C: Prompts to Aid Narrative

In order to understand your story more fully, it would be helpful for me to have a timeline. Could you tell me:

Your age?

His age?

When you first met?

When you married/moved in together?

When you first realised something was wrong?

(If applicable) when he was charged?

(If applicable) when he was convicted?

How did you and your (ex)husband/partner meet?

What might have attracted you to him?

What attracted him to you?

Can you tell me what it was like in the early stages of your relationship?

How would you describe yourself? (If you were to have asked yourself the question "Who am I?" what would your answer have been?)

How would you describe yourselves as a couple?

What were his/your interests?

Had you talked about having children? Were you planning to have children? What factors were involved in that decision?

Where did you live, and how was that decision/were those decisions made?

How would you have described your/his relationships with other people?

Your family, friends;

His family, friends;

Work colleagues, clients, etc.

Do you consider that he was being judged by others as abusive toward you?

How did you feel about this?

Can you tell me about the process of becoming aware that something was wrong in your relationship?

How did you feel about this?

What did you do?

If the police were involved:

Can you talk me through your experiences from the point at which he was reported to the police?

How did the police interact with you?

How did you feel about this?

Was he remanded, or bailed?

Reactions/support of friends, family, colleagues, etc?

Can you tell me how you felt more generally during this time?

Did his case go to trial and, if so, did you attend?

If so, what was that like?

If not, how did you inform yourself of what was happening?

If he was convicted:

Can you tell me what happened once he was convicted?

How did you manage emotionally?

Financial implications of his incarceration?

Social consequences (for you) of his behaviour?

Have you had contact with him since he was sentenced?

If so, who instigated this and how was/is it managed?

How do/did you feel about this?

What sorts of reactions have you had from other people, and how do you feel about these?

Your family, friends;

Work colleagues, clients, etc

Professionals, agencies.

What contact have you had with his:

Family?

Friends?

What support have you received?

Family, friends, etc?

Professionals, agencies?

How, if at all, is your life different now?

What kinds of things have helped you to deal with your situation?

How do you feel about your ex husband (as opposed to his behaviour) now?

Can you talk about how you came to the decision to speak with me about your experiences?

If you were to ask yourself the question “Who am I?” what would your answer be now?

Can you sum up the things that are/have been most significant for you throughout this period? What, if anything, would you like to say to:

Other women finding themselves in a similar situation?

The criminal justice system (police, courts)?

Other agencies?

People generally?

Is there anything else you would like to say?

Appendix D: IASREC Guidance Notes

IASREC – NOTES AND GUIDANCE FOR ETHICS COMMITTEE APPLICATIONS.

The IASREC considers proposals for primary research from all undergraduate and post-graduate students and staff within the Dept of Applied Social Studies. The Division of Psychology has its own arrangements for ethical approval of student projects at under-graduate level as does the Institute of Health Research for Postgraduate and Undergraduate Students and Staff.

The IASREC is responsible for ethical approval of all research undertaken by staff, undergraduate and post graduate students within the Department of Applied Social Studies whose research focus is Social Research

Completing the form: The IASREC form has been designed to ensure that when fully completed an application has addressed all relevant areas. This form should be able to 'stand alone' meaning that members of the ethics committee should not need to read your complete proposal to understand what you intend to do. Not all questions will be relevant to all projects but it is important that the information provided is sufficient for the committee to be able to gain a thorough understanding of:

- what you wish to do
- how you intend to do it and what methods you will use
- which groups of participants are to be approached
- the extent to which risk and safeguards have been considered and addressed.

If in doubt about completing any aspect of this form consult your supervisor or, where appropriate, a member of the IASR Ethics Committee

Researching with children and young people: If the child or young person is aged under 16 it may be necessary to obtain parental consent or the consent of someone acting in locus parentis to include them in your research. If the young person is aged 14-18 and is considered to be 'Gillick Competent' they are able to give consent on their own behalf. However, for people in this age group, please consider the notes below on groups that may be regarded as 'vulnerable' and who may therefore require some special considerations

Examples of groups who might be considered 'vulnerable' include: (this list is not exhaustive)
People with learning disabilities
People with mental health problems
People with drug/alcohol problems or addictions
People in situations of extreme powerlessness (for example, homeless people)
People with relationships to the researcher over whom the researcher may exert power or control (for example, your own client group or your own students)
People in custody
People with long-term, life threatening illnesses
People living in residential care (children, young people, elderly people, people with disabilities)
People living in extremely disadvantaging social and/or economic circumstances
People involved in situations of, or recovering from, child abuse/rape/domestic violence/sexual exploitation
People on migratory journeys (refugee groups and/or people who are seeking asylum)

'Sensitive' research involves researching topics that may be considered 'taboo', morally or legally ambiguous and/or emotionally challenging. While some topics might be considered inherently sensitive (child sexual abuse, for example) other topics are rendered sensitive by the moral or political climate that surrounds the activity being investigated. For this reason, it is difficult to provide a definitive list of topics that may be considered 'sensitive' but some examples might include: (this list is not exhaustive). Please use your discretion when deciding whether your topic might be considered 'sensitive' or not.
Sexual activity
Drug/Alcohol Misuse
Bullying
Domestic Violence
Parent/child conflict
Experiences of being looked after
Experiences of being fostered / adopted
Experiences of child abuse
Experiences of mental health problems
Experiences of eating disorders
Living with a life threatening condition (e.g. HIV/AIDS)
Involvement in criminal behaviour
Involvement in migratory processes (legal or illegal)

Appendix E: Information Sheet and Consent Form

Perceptions of Identity in Women's Talk of Entering, Enduring and Leaving Abusive Relationships

Information for Participants

Introduction

My name is Jo Neale, and I'm doing a PhD at the University of Bedfordshire. I'm interested in exploring issues of identity in relation to women experiencing domestic violence.

I understand that you have been in an abusive relationship, but are now in the process of moving on with your life. I would like to talk with you (and, if you agree, digitally record our conversation) about the person you consider you were before you met your abusing partner, and while you were in the relationship with him. I'd also like to learn about who you consider yourself to be now, and how you see yourself in the future. My hope is that, by increasing our understanding of women's sense of identity, we will be able to provide more appropriate support for those who have experienced abusive relationships.

Consent

Your participation is entirely voluntary and, should you consent, you would be free to withdraw from **the study at any point.**

Confidentiality

Anything you tell me about your personal circumstances would be treated with the utmost confidentiality; I would discuss it with my supervisor at the University, but would not tell anybody else. The only time I would breach that confidentiality would be if you were to tell me something that makes me think you or someone else is in significant danger. In that case, I would discuss it with you but might also need to tell someone else.

Anonymity

When I come to write up my study I will make sure that you (or anyone else you talk about) cannot be identified from what I say. I will not use real names, or any other information (specific places, etc.) that might lead people to work out who you are.

Data security

All the information I collect from participants will be kept securely at the University of Bedfordshire. Paper copies will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, and electronic files will be kept on a password-protected computer (that only I have the password for). Once my study has been written up, all these files (paper and electronic) will be destroyed.

My project is being supervised by Professor David Barrett at the University of Bedfordshire. If you would like to speak with him about any aspect of my work, please contact him at david.barrett@beds.ac.uk.

If you would like to help me by taking part in this research, could you begin by signing the consent form overleaf, please? Thank you.

Jo Neale
jo.neale@beds.ac.uk

Perceptions of Identity in Women's Talk of Entering, Enduring and Leaving Abusive Relationships

Consent Form

The aims of this research project have been explained to me, and I understand that:

- My participation is voluntary;
- I have the right to withdraw at any time;
- Confidentiality (except where someone is in significant danger) is assured;
- The information I give will be anonymised;
- All information will be kept securely, and destroyed at the end of the study;
- What we talk about will/will not[35] be digitally recorded.

I agree to participate in this study:

Name: ……. Date: ……..


Perceptions of Identity in Women's Talk of Entering, Enduring and Leaving Abusive Relationships

Copy Consent Form (for you to keep)

The aims of this research project have been explained to me, and I understand that:

- My participation is voluntary;
- I have the right to withdraw at any time;
- Confidentiality (except where someone is in significant danger) is assured;
- The information I give will be anonymised;
- All information will be kept securely, and destroyed at the end of the study;
- What we talk about will/will not be digitally recorded.

I agree to participate in this study:

Name: ……. Date: ……..

[35] Please delete which ever does not apply.

Appendix F: Glossary of symbols used in transcribing

(Jefferson 2004)

Symbol	Meaning
(...)	Ellipses indicate talk omitted from the data segment
[ ]	Square brackets between lines or bracketing two lines of talk indicate the beginning ([) and end (]) of overlapping talk.
(0.4)	Numbers in parentheses represent silence measured to the nearest tenth of a second.
End of line = start of line	Equal signs are latching symbols. When attached to the end of one line and the beginning of another, they indicate that the later talk was "latched onto" the earlier talk with no hesitation, perhaps without even waiting the normal conversational rhythm or "beat".
<u>Wait</u> a minute	Underlining shows vocal stress or emphasis.
STOP	All-uppercase letters represent noticeable loudness.
Oh: no:::	Colons indicate an elongated syllable; the more colons, the more the syllable or sound is stretched.
Wait a mi-	A hyphen shows a sudden cutoff of speech.
This is a (rehash)	Parentheses around words indicate transcriber doubt about what those words are, as in the case of softly spoken or overlapped talk.
This is a ( )	Empty parentheses indicate that some talk was not audible or interpretable at all.
((coughing))	Double parentheses enclose transcriber comments.
she was thirty-nine, thirty-nine?, what is she now,	Punctuation marks are generally used to indicate pitch level rather than sentence type. The question mark shows rising pitch (not necessarily a question). The comma represents a flat pitch or a slight rising-then-falling pitch.
.hh	The h preceded by a period represents an audible inbreath. Longer sounds are transcribed using a longer string: .hhhh
hh	The h without a leading period represents audible exhaling, sometimes associated with laughter; and laughter itself is transcribed using "heh" or "hah" or something similar. When laugh tokens are embedded in a word, they are often represented by an h in parentheses.
pt	The letters pt by themselves represent a lip smack, which occasionally occurs just as a speaker begins to talk.
↑really↑	Upward arrows either side of text denotes higher pitch.
°yes°	Degree symbols either side of text denotes quieter speech, whispering.
'cos,	Modified spelling is used to suggest something of the pronunciation.

Appendix G: Code List

Attempting to leave
Courtship
Cultural tolerance of abuse
Dark triad: Machiavellianism
Dark triad: Narcissism
Dark triad: psychopathy
Disability
Early aspirations
Early warning signs
First impressions of perpetrator
First meeting with perpetrator
Impact of research participation
Interventions by others
Maslow's hierarchy of needs
Meaning of 'home'
Mortification: conditioning
Mortification: deprivation of affection
Mortification: discrediting her to others
Mortification: emotional abuse
Mortification: exhaustion
Mortification: fear
Mortification: financial abuse
Mortification: guilt
Mortification: isolation
Mortification: physical abuse
Mortification: restriction of freedom
Mortification: sexual abuse
Mortification: verbal abuse
Mortification: victim's response
Mortification: victim-blaming
Perceptions of, and explanations for, abuse
Perpetrator's manipulation of other people
Perpetrator's relationships: (his) family
Perpetrator's relationships: (his) friends
Perpetrator: self-control
Perpetrator: substance use

Appendix H: Themes and Codes

Theme	Code
1: Prior experiences, first encounters and courtship	Courtship
	Early aspirations
	First impressions of perpetrator
	First meeting with perpetrator
	Identity during the relationship
	Interventions by others
	Perceptions of, and explanations for, abuse
2: Living with abuse	Attempting to leave
	Early warning signs
	Identity during the relationship
	Interventions by others
	Meaning of 'home'
	Mortification: deprivation of affection
	Mortification: discrediting her to others
	Mortification: emotional abuse
	Mortification: exhaustion
	Mortification: fear
	Mortification: financial abuse
	Mortification: isolation
	Mortification: physical abuse
	Mortification: restriction of freedom
	Mortification: sexual abuse
	Mortification: verbal abuse
	Mortification: victim-blaming
	Perceptions of, and explanations for, abuse
	Perpetrator: substance use
	Perpetrator's manipulation of other people
	Perpetrator's relationships: (his) family
	Perpetrator's relationships: (his) friends
	Resisting abuse
3: Post-separation abuse	Interventions by others
	Meaning of 'home'
	Mortification: discrediting her to others
	Mortification: emotional abuse
	Mortification: exhaustion

	Mortification: fear
	Mortification: financial abuse
	Mortification: physical abuse
	Mortification: sexual abuse
	Mortification: verbal abuse
	Mortification: victim-blaming
	Perceptions of, and explanations for, abuse
	Perpetrator's manipulation of other people
	Resisting abuse

Appendix J: CDs and Thankyou Cards

The wording for the thankyou cards, which were handwritten, was as follows:

> *Just to say a huge 'thank you' for participating in my research project. I really appreciate the time, and emotional energy, that you so generously gave to it – and value, enormously, your contribution.*
>
> *Thank you so much.*
>
> *Best wishes,*
>
> *Jo*

The card was scanned to provide an image that was then used to create matching CD label and jewel case inserts (as per these examples).